

School admits past abuses

THE governors of St James' Independent Schools have apologised unreservedly after a report stated that some pupils had been assaulted by teachers in its early years.

The schools, which include St James School for Senior Boys in Cross Deep, Twickenham, commissioned the report following allegations over discipline.

The inquiry, the first of its kind, conducted by James Townend QC, discovered that some punishments were "unreasonable and criminal".

He stated in the report: "I am in no doubt that mistreatment of pupils took place in the Boy's Schools, mainly during the period 1975 to 1985.

"A small number of teachers did not have control of their tempers. As a result I am satisfied that several boys were subject to rough handling.

"They were criminally assaulted by being punched in the face or in the stomach, cuffed violently about the head, had blackboard rubbers thrown at them, causing injury in some cases, had cricket balls thrown at them violently when they were not looking at the thrower and were struck with the end of a gym rope."

The report added the ethos and conduct of the schools has changed.

Roger Pincham, chairman of governors at St James Independent Schools, said they accepted the findings.

He said: "We apologise unreservedly to those whose welfare and happiness were affected by the disciplinary regime at the time.

"Some physical punishments that were lawful at the time were too harsh and too frequent, some acts went beyond lawful punishment and were wholly unacceptable. That this could have happened in our schools, even a long time ago, is deeply regrettable.

"The report notes that the schools have modernised and developed since those early years. All forms of physical punishment ceased more than a decade ago."

The Parents and Pupils Inquiry Action Group welcomed the report, saying the findings vindicated former pupils and parents who have long campaigned for the truth.

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By Chris W

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