

Saturday

January 23, 2016

\$2.00

www.stuff.co.nz

The South

'Safe room' at school investigated

Parents defend seclusion technique

HANNAH MCLEOD

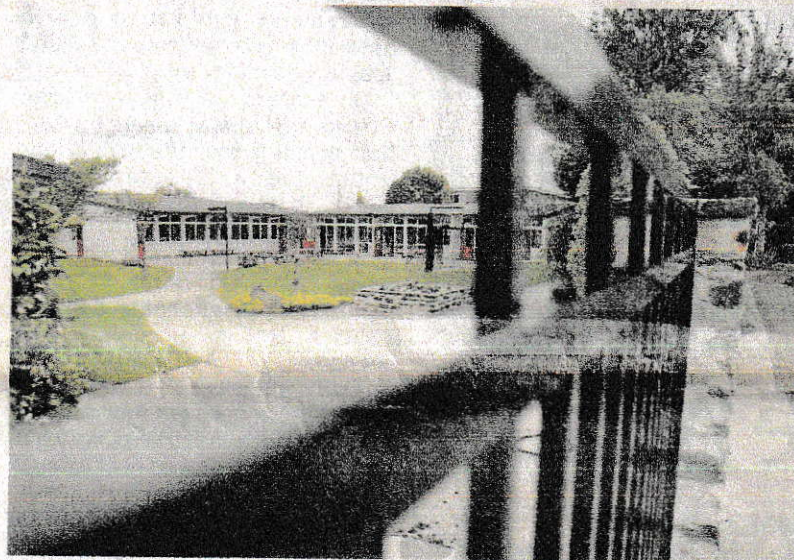
hannah.mcleod@fairfaxmedia.co.nz

Police are investigating a complaint about a pupil being isolated in a "safe room" at an Invercargill special school which a Ministry of Education report described as "dark and grimy" and "not pleasant".

However, Ruru Specialist School maintains safety of students was at all times the highest priority, and two parents with children at the school have spoken out in support of the school.

Confirmation of the investigation comes as the Ministry of Education is preparing guidelines to cover seclusion and physical restraint, saying seclusion is a last resort, where students whose behaviour is a risk to themselves or others are placed alone in a room.

Ministry of Education acting deputy secretary, sector enablement and support, Susan Howan said the ministry received



Ruru School.

PHOTO: NICOLE JOHNSTONE/FAIRFAX NZ 631925336

gation to investigate the parent's complaint," and ruled that the "safe room" was inadequate, Howan said.

The report does not say how long the safe room had been in use.

While the school had some poli-

Clutterbuck said the board was disappointed the matter had been referred to the media.

"We have endeavoured to engage constructively with the parents since they made their complaint in November 2014 but



This flock of sheep in Little's

Cop's

DEBBIE JAMIESON, CHE and DASHA KUPRIENKO

A Queenstown police officer and a flock of sheep joined the line-up yesterday morning.

The sheep were being moved along Little's Rd when they were involved in the road block that ended at

Parents defend seclusion technique

HANNAH MCLEOD

hannah.mcleod@fairfaxmedia.co.nz

Police are investigating a complaint about a pupil being isolated in a "safe room" at an Invercargill special school which a Ministry of Education report described as "dark and grimy" and "not pleasant".

However, Ruru Specialist School maintains safety of students was at all times the highest priority, and two parents with children at the school have spoken out in support of the school.

Confirmation of the investigation comes as the Ministry of Education is preparing guidelines to cover seclusion and physical restraint, saying seclusion is a last resort, where students whose behaviour is a risk to themselves or others are placed alone in a room.

Ministry of Education acting deputy secretary, sector enablement and support, Susan Howan said the ministry received a complaint from a parent about the use of a "safe room" at Ruru Specialist School in Invercargill on December 5, 2014.

Howan said the parent's complaint was "about a pupil who was put in a 'safe room' for a short period following a period of challenging behaviour."

After senior managers from the ministry visited the school and advised the principal of the complaint on December 10, 2014, the school stopped using the safe room immediately, she said.

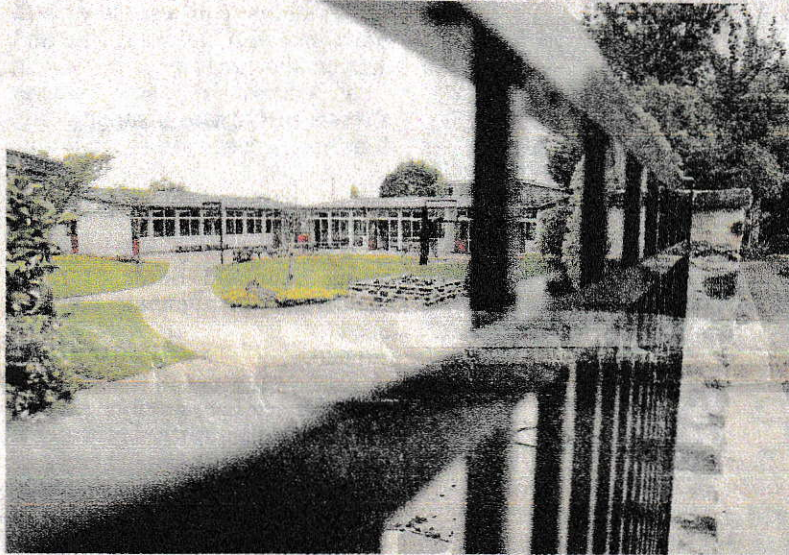
On December 23, 2014, the ministry commissioned an independent investigator to look into the complaint, and her report was received on February 27, 2015.

The report found that the child had been placed in the safe room three times in 2011, for a total of 17 minutes, Howan said.

"We understand the door to the room was left open at all times."

"However, the report also found that the room, which measured 3.3 metres high by 1.3m by 1.8m, was 'dark and grimy' and 'not pleasant', and that children placed in it were likely to feel as though they had been punished."

The report found the school "fell short in fulfilling its obli-



Ruru School.

PHOTO: NICOLE JOHNSTONE/FAIRFAX NZ 631925336

gation to investigate the parent's complaint," and ruled that the "safe room" was inadequate, Howan said.

The report does not say how long the safe room had been in use.

While the school had some poli-

"A glorified cupboard would describe it."

Belinda Burtenshaw

cies in relation to use of the room, the report found they were not robust enough and recommended the board review them, Howan said.

The report made recommendations which included the "safe room" be closed, and for the board of trustees to consider "less restrictive options" to manage behaviour, she said.

The board developed an action plan and all the recommendations were being carried out.

The ministry was not investigating the matter further, but continued to monitor the school, Howan said.

A police spokesperson on Thursday confirmed they were investigating a complaint about the use of a "seclusion room" at the school but were unable to comment further.

Ruru Specialist School board of trustees chairperson Robyn

Clutterbuck said the board was disappointed the matter had been referred to the media.

"We have endeavoured to engage constructively with the parents since they made their complaint in November 2014 but, sadly, this has not been possible."

The board had co-operated with all agencies involved since the complaint was made, she said.

"We believe that our staff have conducted themselves in a professional and responsible manner with the best interests and safety of students, families and communities being their priority."

The board believed the matter was closed, but would co-operate fully with any further investigations, Clutterbuck said.

"[We] remain confident that our hardworking staff have acted appropriately."

The parents who laid the complaint declined to comment.

Invercargill mother Belinda Burtenshaw said she was shocked to hear the school's safe room was under investigation.

Her son Casey, 17, who is autistic, has attended the school for two years, and had used the safe room once.

"It was a non-event. Of course he doesn't like it and he hasn't gone back [to the room]." Burtenshaw said she was shown the safe room when she first enrolled Casey at the school and it



This flock of sheep in Little's

Cop's

DEBBIE JAMIESON, CHIEF and DASHA KUPRIENKO

A Queenstown police officer's flock of sheep joined the officer's duty yesterday morning.

The sheep were being along Little's Rd when the road block that ended the 90-minute police car chase in Central Otago and Queenstown.

Senior Sergeant Paula of Queenstown, said the officer belonged to a local police and happened to be in the place at the right time.

The sheep were being a farm worker who appeared unfazed by the scene unfolding behind him and carried on the job.

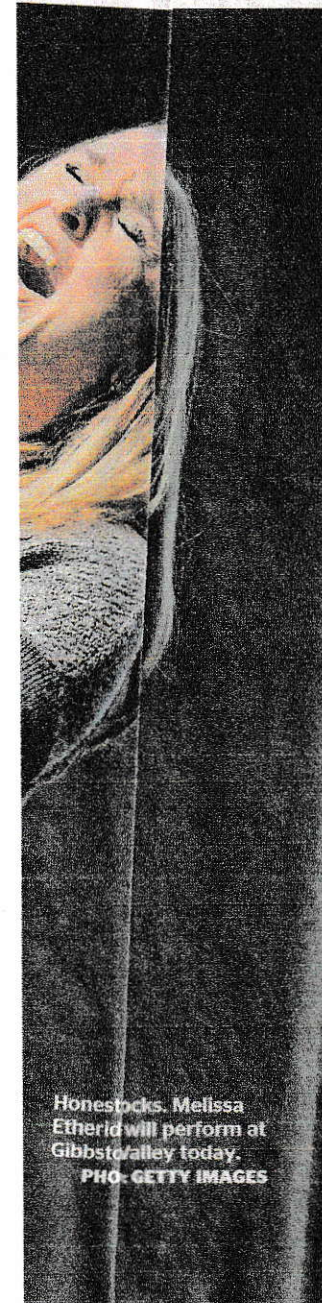
None of the sheep, or v

12-year

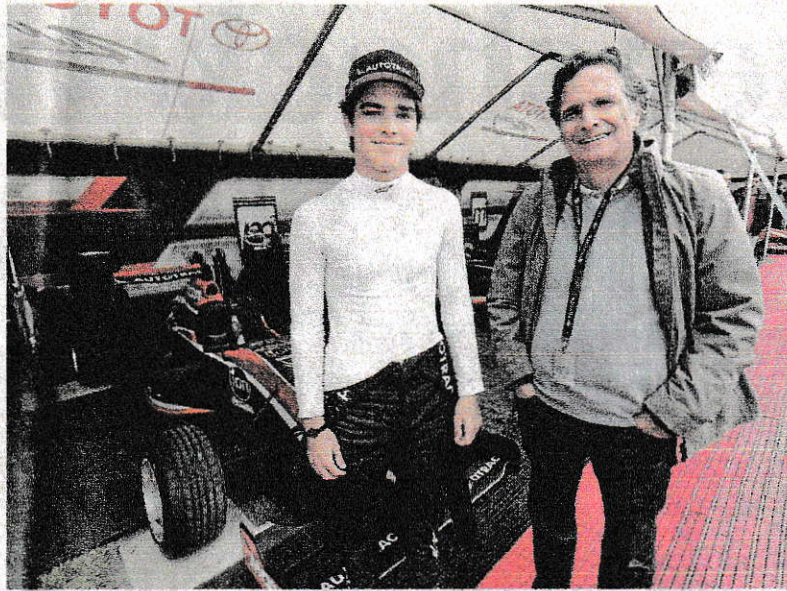


Continued page A3

bstn's
onct



Honestocks. Melissa Etherid will perform at Gibbsto/alley today.
PHO: GETTY IMAGES



Pedro, 17, and Nelson Piquet in front of Pedro's F3 car for the Toyota Racing Series at Teretonga Park Raceway.

PHOTO: NICOLE JOHNSTONE/FAIRFAX NZ

Former F1 star Nelson Piquet in Invercargill

BRITTANY PICKETT

brittany.pickett@fairfaxmedia.co.nz

Interest in formula one motor racing might be piqued as a famous name graces Teretonga this weekend.

Brazilian three-time F1 world champion Nelson Piquet is in Invercargill to support his 17-year-old son Pedro as he races in the Toyota Racing Series starting today at Teretonga Park Raceway.

It is understood Nelson's private jet is parked at Invercargill Airport, while the F1 superstar calls a motorhome parked at Teretonga home for the next few days.

This is the second time the F1 champ has travelled to Invercargill. He was last here in 2014 when Pedro was competing at Teretonga for the first time.

Having his dad fly around the

The teenager has been behind the wheel since he was 8, following in the footsteps of his father and three older half-brothers.

"I think it's important because I get a lot of good advice," Pedro said.

His father's presence also kept him motivated. "I know I need to deliver for him."

The pair would travel together while Pedro races, before Nelson heads back to Brazil for business.

They had already spent a week enjoying Auckland, but unlike their last trip would not be heading to Queenstown, Pedro said.

Nelson was enjoying being back in Invercargill to watch Pedro compete: "It's a nice place here."

Travelling around the world to watch his sons race was nothing new. With five sons, four of whom race, Nelson said he was used to it.

Pedro would be the last son he would accompany to races, as his

School 'safe room'

Continued from page A1

did not bother her. "Everything I've experienced with Ruru [has been] above standard."

She could not recall what the room was like, but said it was similar to others she had seen.

Casey had previously attended nine schools, two of which had safe rooms, she said.

They were bare rooms with no windows or furnishings, Burtenshaw said.

"A glorified cupboard would describe it."

Tammy Walker, who has two children attending the school, said while she had not seen the "safe room", she did not have a problem with it.

"If it's a safe place being used to control the out-of-control person ... there's absolutely nothing in the world wrong with that."

Howan said a working group of experts had been developing guidelines for special schools which would cover seclusion and physical restraint.

"Our main concern, in common with schools and their boards, is to ensure that all students are given the best possible education in a safe environment.

"Each school board determines its policies and practices for student management and wellbeing."

Special schools were funded to provide specialist support and their policies and practices were expected to be safe, legal, and based on current good practice, she said. "To help them with this we are developing guidelines, which will be made available to all schools in the next few months."

Former F1 star Nelson Piquet in Invercargill

BRITTANY PICKETT

brittany.pickett@fairfaxmedia.co.nz

Interest in formula one motor racing might be piqued as a famous name graces Teretonga this weekend.

Brazilian three-time F1 world champion Nelson Piquet is in Invercargill to support his 17-year-old son Pedro as he races in the Toyota Racing Series starting today at Teretonga Park Raceway.

It is understood Nelson's private jet is parked at Invercargill Airport, while the F1 superstar calls a motorhome parked at Teretonga home for the next few days.

This is the second time the F1 champ has travelled to Invercargill. He was last here in 2014 when Pedro was competing at Teretonga for the first time.

Having his dad fly around the world to watch him race was not a new thing for Pedro.

The teenager has been behind the wheel since he was 8, following in the footsteps of his father and three older half-brothers.

"I think it's important because I get a lot of good advice," Pedro said.

His father's presence also kept him motivated. "I know I need to deliver for him."

The pair would travel together while Pedro races, before Nelson heads back to Brazil for business.

They had already spent a week enjoying Auckland, but unlike their last trip would not be heading to Queenstown, Pedro said.

Nelson was enjoying being back in Invercargill to watch Pedro compete: "It's a nice place here."

Travelling around the world to watch his sons race was nothing new. With five sons, four of whom race, Nelson said he was used to it.

Pedro would be the last son he would accompany to races, as his youngest, Marco, had no interest in cars, Nelson said.

Burtenshaw said.

"A glorified cupboard would describe it."

Tammy Walker, who has two children attending the school, said while she had not seen the "safe room", she did not have a problem with it.

"If it's a safe place being used to control the out-of-control person ... there's absolutely nothing in the world wrong with that."

Howan said a working group of experts had been developing guidelines for special schools which would cover seclusion and physical restraint.

"Our main concern, in common with schools and their boards, is to ensure that all students are given the best possible education in a safe environment."

"Each school board determines its policies and practices for student management and wellbeing."

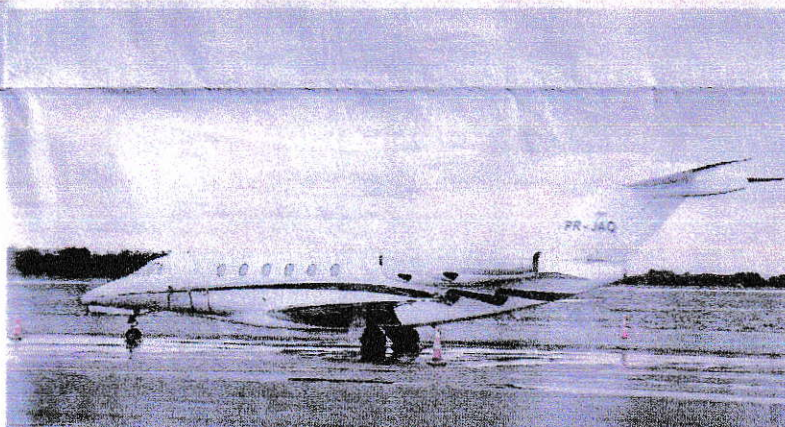
Special schools were funded to provide specialist support and their policies and practices were expected to be safe, legal, and based on current good practice, she said. "To help them with this we are developing guidelines, which will be made available to all schools in the next few months."

The collective feedback of the working group was that seclusion was a last resort and it was seldom used in schools, Howan said.

Ruru Specialist School is for students with identified high and very high educational needs who receive Ongoing Resourcing (ORS) through the ministry and other students with moderate needs.

The school's website says it has a well-resourced base school, three satellite classes, a transition programme that specialises in vocational experiences and a flat for self-care programmes.

Ruru Specialist School principal Erin Cairns could not be contacted for comment.



The private jet parked at Invercargill Airport.

PHOTO: NICOLE JOHNSTONE/FAIRFAX NZ 631925335

Honesty. Melissa Etheridge will perform at Gibbsto today. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

bridge tweeted this picture of film producer wife Linda Queenstown. PHOTO: TWITTER

5

n

12