

INDIAN AFFAIRS

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CANADA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

OTTAWA, April 14th, 1953.

To: ALL TEACHERS,  
PRINCIPALS OF DAY AND RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS,  
REGIONAL INSPECTORS OF INDIAN SCHOOLS,  
SUPERINTENDENTS OF INDIAN AGENCIES,  
REGIONAL SUPERVISORS OF INDIAN AGENCIES,  
INDIAN COMMISSIONER FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA.

The department invites the attention of principals and teachers to the following statement of policy regarding school discipline, with particular reference to the use of corporal punishment at Indian schools.

There is general agreement that behaviour problems seldom occur if children are kept occupied in activities which are meaningful, challenging and worthwhile to them. This principle prevails equally within and outside the classroom.

Any form of punishment tending to humiliate a pupil is to be avoided. This policy applies alike to the use of sarcasm or to the employment of practices calculated to produce distinctive changes in appearance or dress.

It is generally approved practice for teachers to abstain from physical contacts with pupils either in anger, or affection. Children's reports of such contacts have sometimes been so exaggerated as to make the teacher's position untenable.

In any event there must be no corporal punishment of a pupil who is suspected to be suffering from any physical or mental ailment which corporal punishment may aggravate.

Before resorting to the use of corporal punishment, the principal or teacher in charge must be convinced that no other approved form of punishment will have the necessary punitive and corrective effects. The educator must be sure that the pupil was aware of doing wrong. The presence of such a factor as premeditation, deliberate repetition or heedlessness of consequences may sometimes justify a more serious view and the use of corporal punishment.

The principal or teacher in charge of a school will decide whether corporal punishment is to be used and will personally administer it in the presence of a witness at a time selected to avoid disturbing the school programme. The witness should be a staff member of the same sex as the pupil who is to be punished; the matron at a residential school should witness the corporal punishment of a girl. Only the strap as issued to the principal or teacher in charge will be used. It will be applied only to the palm of the hand.

In a special book reserved for the purpose a record will be kept of every occasion of corporal punishment. This record will show the date, the name of the pupil, a description of the offence, the number of strokes on either hand, and will be signed by the person who used the strap and by the witness.

*Philip Phelan*  
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