

Student's parents file suit against Otsego schools

Allege district failed to protect then-second grader from sexual assault, bullying

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BLADE STAFF



The parents of a former Otsego student filed suit against the school district today in U.S. District Court, claiming school officials failed to protect their daughter from sexual assault and bullying by two fellow students.

The parents, who are identified only by initials, claim that beginning in the 2012-13 school year, while their now-11-year-old daughter was a second grader at Otsego Elementary, two brothers — one in second grade and the other in third grade — began a campaign of bullying and sexual harassment that continued through last November when she transferred to another school.

The incidents allegedly began with name-calling and escalated to physical assaults and death threats. In one incident, the young girl was allegedly pushed down on the bus where the boys pulled her pants down and spanked her while holding their hand over her mouth.

The complaint alleges that school officials — from bus drivers and recess monitors to teachers and administrators — failed to protect her. The suit, which has been assigned to Judge Jeffrey Helmick, seeks unspecified punitive damages and attorney fees.

Otsego Superintendent Adam Koch said he could not comment on pending litigation, but added that his district has policies it follows regarding bullying and harassment.

“We take all allegations very seriously, and we act in a responsible way when students misbehave,” Mr. Koch said. “Student safety is definitely a high priority for us.”