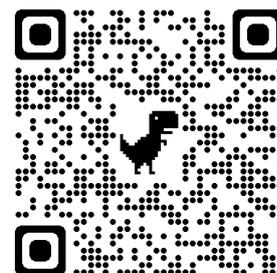


3 Arrested in Japan over Abuse at Nursery School



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20221205204202731/>

Three women who used to work at a nursery school in central Japan have been arrested on suspicion of physically abusing children there. Police suspect the school director tried to cover up their maltreatment.

The suspected assaults occurred when the women were working at Sakura nursery school in the town of Susono. They had all quit by the end of November. Police officers searched the school on Sunday morning. They say the suspects pushed the one-year-old children in the face, held them upside down by their feet, and hit them on the head. The school says the three engaged in 15 kinds of ill treatment between June and August this year. A mother whose toddler goes to the nursery school expressed her feelings over the arrests.

I feel relieved that they have been arrested. I hope the victims will be identified as soon as possible.

The three women allegedly yelled at the children and pinched their cheeks. They also forced children to touch the bottom of one child who had symptoms of hand-foot-and-mouth disease. The women told staff investigating the abuse allegations, they regret what they did, but called their actions discipline and guidance. NHK has learned details of how the school and the city responded. Here's the timeline of the case: in July a whistleblower at the school raised the alarm. The head teacher made multiple rounds of the class to assess the situation, but no further investigation was carried out because mistreatment of the infants couldn't be confirmed. The nursery school director Sakurai Toshihiko learned about the internal report on the matter in August, but he took no action. On August 17th, Susono city officials were informed about the alleged abuse. A week later, the school submitted to the city officer, a report on the suspects maltreatment of children in their care. On September 9th the school decided to suspend the three teachers. One of them appealed the decision. But there was no communication between the city and school for weeks after that. It seems neither side made any attempt to identify victims or arrange a meeting of parents to explain what had

happened. On November 29th, parents were briefed for the first time on the matter in a meeting organized by the school. Almost 4 months had passed since the whistleblower disclosed the alleged abuse. The school invited parents to another meeting on Thursday. School director Sakurai apologized to parents.

I am sincerely sorry for the acts that hurt the dignity of your precious children.

This is really shocking. The suspects may have been taking care of my child.

Anger is boiling up inside me. I can't sleep at night.

The director admitted asking the whistleblower not to step forward.

You, as the head of the school, knelt down on the ground and begged the teacher not to tell others about the abuse. Is this true?

Yes, I said that.

Please answer if you knelt down on the ground.

Yes, I did.

Isn't this a cover up?

City officials say that in October, the school made all staff pledge in writing, not to disclose anything related to work. The school management say the aim was to protect privacy. Susono's mayor is taking legal action against the school's director. On Monday, the mayor filed a complaint with police against Sakurai over his alleged cover-up of suspected child abuse.

This incident is not only about the teachers. The response of the nursery head was problematic and malicious as he tried to cover-up what happened.

Murata admitted that the city's response was tardy, saying officials should have demanded that the school tell parents what had been going on. He said he'll punish officials involved, including himself.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. Do you know any other details about the story?
2. What punishment do you think the school staff and nursery head should face?
3. How do you feel about the mayor's response?
4. Can you think of any ways to prevent these kinds of incidents from occurring in the future?
5. After the victims are identified, what should be done?