5-year-old boy handcuffed in school, taken to hospital for misbehaving

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A 5-year-old boy was handcuffed and hauled off to a psych ward for misbehaving in kindergarten - but the tot's parents say NYPD school safety agents are the ones who need their heads examined.

"He's 5 years old. He was scared to death," Dennis Rivera's mother, Jasmina Vasquez, told the Daily News. "You cannot imagine what it's done to him."

Dennis - who suffers from speech problems, asthma and attention deficit disorder - never went back to class at Public School 81 in Queens after the traumatic incident.

His mom and a school source said Dennis was taken to the principal's office, where he apparently knocked items off a desk.

Rather than calling the boy's parents, a school safety agent cuffed the boy's small hands behind his back using metal restraints, the school source said.

The agent and school officials then called an ambulance to take the tot to Elmhurst Hospital Center for a mental evaluation.

Vasquez was stunned when a guidance counselor asked her to show her son was being taken to the psych ward.

Vasquez rushed to the school from her job as a patient representative at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan. On the way, she called Dennis' baby-sitter, who was closer to PS 81, and asked her to hurry over to the school.

When baby-sitter Sandy Ortiz arrived, Dennis was still handcuffed, she said. School safety agents also were holding his elbows even though the boy was calm, Ortiz said. Dennis is about 4-feet-3 and weighs 68 pounds.

"I hugged him. I said, 'OK, release the cuffs, I'm taking him,'" she recalled. "They told me, 'No, Miss. You're not taking him anywhere.'"

When Ortiz routinely picks up Dennis from class, she said she's never seen him behave in a way that would require him to be restrained.

"I was so upset. There's no reason to handcuff a baby of 5 years old, traumatize him that way," she said.

The handcuffs were removed before Dennis was walked out of the school and driven by ambulance to Elmhurst Hospital Center. He was evaluated at the hospital and released about four hours later, his mom said.

School sources said Dennis had punched an assistant principal the day before he acted out in class. The sources also said he broke glass in an office door a week earlier.

A spokesman for the city Education Department declined to comment on why school safety agents needed to handcuff Dennis, saying the incident was under investigation.

The NYPD, which oversees school safety agents, also declined to discuss specifics. Deputy Police Commissioner Paul Browne said, "We hope common sense would prevail and we are looking at what happened."

Vasquez immediately withdrew Dennis from PS 81 and enrolled him in a private school, Grand Street Settlement.

"I asked him, 'Do you want to go back to that school?' He broke down in tears," Vasquez said. "He said, 'I don't want to go! I don't want to go!'"
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mentioned, probably because he is not around. Let's examine the real is enough. Also where is the father to this boy? Figures he is not

Where was the mother then? Get control of your bad kids, enough

This child was disruptive an broke a window in the previous week. not be forced to make a decision on whether to handcuff this kid.

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with it on a professional level. Just my opinion.

With the program and make sure they have staff that know how to deal

knows how to handle it. With more and more kids being diagnosed

beginning. My son gets language from them three times a week he is (expressing) the school should have been helping him from the very
down before he got to this point. My son has the same disability its not just a speech delay its a language delay (understanding) and (expressing) the school should have been helping him from the very beginning. My son gets language from them three times a week he is with a teacher that knows his disability and there is an aide in the class to help him yes he will have his moments but this school knows how to handle it. With more and more kids being diagnosed with adhd, developmentally delayed, autism these schools better get with the program and make sure they have staff that know how to deal with it on a professional level. Just my opinion.

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What is the matter with these school police? They could have tasered him just as easily, then watch him jiggle on the floor for a bit, then send him home and charge him the next day. I mean the courts need to straighten this kid out before he grows up to be a career neer-do-well!!! (just kidding!)

Kelle

When my little boy was five years old, I would have been absolutely horrified to hear that my baby had been cuffed. However, we were not in the room, we were not the administrators who have dealt with the child in the past and are not in the position to judge their actions. My son had little boys in kindergarten who tried to stab the teacher with scissors, who stabbed another student with pencils, who slapped another teacher across her face and was never cuffed. That child could have blinded another student with the pencil - so I really have mixed feelings - maybe the "trauma" of being cuffed could teach a child a lesson. If the adults tried to hold him down or hold on to hands and left a mark doing so, well could you imagine the uproar then. The part I don't understand is that when his babysitter came to pick him up and left a mark doing so, well could you imagine the uproar then. The parents are right, this cops needs psychological help and maybe some jail time. If a parent had handcuffed a child to take it to the hospital, what would happen to them?

nothatdumb

A 5-year-old boy was handcuffed in the school? What has been touch in the police department for them to have a such insane attitude? If the boy was black than all makes sense, NYPD seems to have a phobia for black people and kill them as soon as possible. Why this great press of this great country, don't ask the mayor what is his opinion about this incident? I would love to hear what he has to say. It things keeps getting this way, the claims from that pig lawyer Schwartz, from the Nixzmary's case, will soon become rights, a 'funky' kid should be torture and killed because that's behavior has asked for that. Sick people. The parents are right, this cops needs psychological help and maybe some jail time. If a parent had handcuffed a child to take it to the hospital, what would happen to them?

Veteran teacher

I am sorry to say that I have witnessed children like Dennis Rivera at my school. A 4'3" five year old kindergartner is unusual. A 4'3" child that punches an adult has no respect for authority. A 4'3" child that purposely breaks the glass of a front door and clears a principal's desk has no respect for property and is trying to make a statement. Will he bring a butcher knife to school next? The mother is not doing her job--- lack of education, parenting skills, money, all of the above? The picture of the "poor child" demonstrating how his hands were cuffed does not denote a child "scared to death" as the mother purports. It is a look of defiance and anger. I would bet money that Dennis is not an attention deficit child. There is a very fine line between bipolar and attention deficit behaviors-- the perpensity for violence divides the two. I will admit that there have been children at my school. A 4'3" five year old kindergartener is unusual. A 4'3" child I am sorry to say that I have witnessed children like Dennis Rivera at my school. A 4'3" five year old kindergartner is unusual. A 4'3" child that punches an adult has no respect for authority. A 4'3" child that purposely breaks the glass of a front door and clears a principal's desk has no respect for property and is trying to make a statement. Will he bring a butcher knife to school next? The mother is not doing her job--- lack of education, parenting skills, money, all of the above? The picture of the "poor child" demonstrating how his hands were cuffed does not denote a child "scared to death" as the mother purports. It is a look of defiance and anger. I would bet money that Dennis is not an attention deficit child. There is a very fine line between bipolar and attention deficit behaviors-- the perpensity for violence divides the two. I will admit that there have been children at my school. A 4'3" five year old kindergartener is unusual. A 4'3" child

CONTINUED... The destructive behavior continues to escalate, the parents are unable to offer any solutions, the school runs out of options and the child is 'shocked' into looking at the reality of his/her behavior in a civilized world. I fear for Mom's safety. What will he be like as a fourteen year old? She needs to take this opportunity to set her son right and not try to 'cash in' on this. Otherwise, handcuffs will be a major part of his future.

Veteran teacher

The real problem with this story is that too many people believe it takes a village to raise their children. Parents need to take responsibility for raising their children and stop blaming other people when their children "misbehave". If your child did something nasty toward me or my family I would do whatever was necessary to stop him. Teach YOUR kids respect for others at home and there will be less problems outside the home, and your income level or skin color has nothing to do with it.

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