Police want students' Facebook 'fight club' page shut down

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5:00 AM Saturday Mar 7, 2015

A Facebook page has been set up for Auckland children to post videos of vicious schoolyard fights and brag about their violence. Concerned police have contacted the social networking giant in a bid to have the page taken down.

But two schools involved have told the Herald the videos are historic and they won't be laying complaints, infuriating anti-bullying campaigners who have accused the schools of "normalising" violence.

The page, which the Herald has chosen not to name, appears to have been created last month and features five videos of fighting - involving girls and boys, most wearing their school uniforms with some of the fights taking place on school property.

One video of a fight between two boys allegedly from Green Bay High School has almost 50 comments from people encouraging the violence and tagging their friends in posts.

One wrote: "This is a awesome page who ever put it up. Yr cool [sic]."

Others were less impressed. One person said he hoped the page was closed down.

The page had 797 "likes" last night and its creator said more videos would be uploaded once the page reached 1000 likes.

It is not clear who is behind the page and a Herald inquiry went unanswered.

Schools mentioned on the page include Henderson High School, Waitakere College, Lynfield College, Kelston Girls' College and Green Bay High School.

Lynfield principal Steve Boviard said he believed a video allegedly showing the school's students was old, and he would not be making a complaint to Facebook. "If I knew for certain it was Lynfield and I knew who the person was I would look at contacting Facebook, but it can be quite difficult. It's not like you can just ring and say you don't like something."

Kelston Girls' College principal Linda Fox said she believed a video of the school's students, in which one girl punches another in the head repeatedly, was about five years old. "These sites have been going on for quite a while now, and it's not just in West Auckland, or New Zealand," she said. "I can't see the point of having these sorts of websites but it seems to be something that young people like to set up." She said if the video was new, she would have talked to the student.

A Waitemata police spokeswoman said content was being monitored. "We have reported the site to Facebook and have been in contact with several relevant parties, including schools ... police take incidents of this nature seriously." As the matter involved children under the age of 17, police would not make any further comment.

Patrick Walsh, the chairman of Online Safety Advisory Group, which last month released guidelines on digital behaviour in schools, said principals should take action. "It's not just the students involved, it's about the bystander effect. It's wrong and inappropriate for people that know an assault is taking place to stand there and video it as a form of entertainment. "To have it online normalises it and it should be taken down."

Netsafe executive director Martin Cocker said people depicted on such sites were "revictimised every time people view a video of a fight and by the existence of the content".

It has also emerged that police have contacted Facebook over a video of two female students from Rangeview Intermediate School fighting, which was viewed more than 80,000 times this week. The clip has been taken down.

Facebook could not be contacted for comment.

1. Summarise the issue in your own words in 2 sentences.
2. List the people mentioned in the article and next to each person or group, state their point of view on the issue.
3. What is the purpose of this written text, and who is the likely audience?
4. What is the writer’s perspective on the issue? Quote from the article words and phrases that support your answer.
5. What language features would you expect to find in a news article?
6. Write a paragraph stating your response to the issue. Aim to develop your response by explaining and elaborating in detail what you think about it.