

Trustees open up about swarming

By DANIELA SIMUNAC, SUN MEDIA

Thames Valley school board officials last night spoke openly for the first time about a racially-charged student swarming, nine days after it took place outside Clara Brenton elementary school.

Thames Valley acting director of education John Thorpe called the swarming "the most regrettable occurrence" during his announcements at the regular public meeting of the board.

He told board members the students involved in the incident have been identified, the issue was addressed and proper disciplinary measures have been taken.

Superintendent of education Marion Moynihan, whose area covers Clara Brenton, declined to elaborate on the disciplinary measures, citing privacy law, but said the families of the boys who were involved in the swarming have been interviewed.

Previously, members of the board either declined comment or provided scant detail about the incident in which a group of Grade 8 boys continually taunted an adult woman and mimicked her Chinese accent.

The bullying escalated last Monday when the woman, a mother of a child at the school, was slapped and head-butted as the incident was video recorded on a cell phone, according to pupil and neighbour accounts.

Trustee Peter Jaffe, a child psychologist whose expertise includes violence and bullying prevention, said last night, "It is impossible to prevent bullying . . . but the test of will is in how we respond."

