

Knife scare locks down high school



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Emergency response officers patrol Stouffville Secondary.

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Stouffville District Secondary School was locked down for more than two hours Friday morning after a male student was allegedly discovered holding a female student at knifepoint in a school washroom.

Another student coming into the washroom reported the incident to school officials.

The York Region Police

Emergency Response unit and nine cruisers responded to the call a few minutes later.

By early afternoon, police officers were still in the school but neither the alleged perpetrator nor victim had been found.

The school had called a Code Red, meaning that almost 900 students were unable to leave their classrooms.

Those who were outside were instructed to stay a safe

distance away from the building.

Inside, many students were huddled in classrooms under desks away from windows and doors. In a science classroom, students were hunkered down in one corner.

"We are going through videotapes looking for this person," school principal Arlene Smith said, referring to surveillance cameras in the school.

It's common for many students to carry penknives or multi-purpose knives with attachments such as screwdrivers and nail files, several students noted.

"It was one of those days," Grade 12 student Jamie Patterson said.

Early that morning, horseplay among students led to one being pushed against one of the school's front doors as they were waiting to go on a field trip. When police arrived to respond to the Code Red call after 10:30 a.m., the shattered glass door

had been boarded and taped up.

Ms Patterson and another student, Cat Ventrella, also in Grade 12, ended up shivering in the cold for two hours after they returned from getting food to donate to the Stouffville Food Bank.

Several students used cell phones to call friends inside the school.

Grade 12 student Shane Ouellette talked to friends who said Emergency Response Team officers were patrolling the halls to make sure no one left their classrooms.

Sam Sheridan in Grade 12 phoned her sister inside the school and was told everyone stayed fairly calm.

Grade 10 student Andrew Latour noted people started to get "jumpy" after about an hour.

There wasn't too much alarm among students because a knife rather than a gun was involved, Grade 11 student Lauren Boynton explained.

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