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Parents Ask Moscow School to Remove Girl With Down Syndrome From Yearbook

By Anna Dolgov

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The parents of at least five students have had their children transferred to other classes to avoid sitting in the room with Masha, Sinayeva said.

A Moscow school has allegedly moved to edit a girl with Down syndrome out of its yearbook, after several parents complained that her picture ruined the glossy album, a student's mother said.

The school has asked parents this week to return the newly printed class photo album, the mother, Olga Sinayeva, said on her Facebook page.

"The album is all so very pompously glossy, with all kinds of poetry about school, friendship and mutual understanding, with pages separated by parchment paper," Sinayeva said Tuesday.

“The reason why children were asked to return this album is simple: Many parents can't stand the photograph of the girl, Masha, who has Down syndrome, the daughter of the homeroom teacher, next to their children,” Sinayeva said.

Masha, 7, is not a student in the class, but sits with the fourth-graders her mother teaches, according to Sinayeva. She has been accepted to begin regular school next year, but for now, the teacher, a single mother, takes Masha to work with her because she has nobody with whom to leave her, Sinayeva said.

“The mom is teaching, Masha is sitting quietly ... [she] doesn't get in anybody's way,” Sinayeva said, adding: “Masha practically lives in this class, tries to interact, hugs everyone, she is kind and defenseless, but children shrink away from her.”

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Comments to her Facebook post include a remark by another woman, Gulmira Kushekova, saying that when her daughter, who also suffers from Down syndrome, was accepted to a “regular” kindergarten, the parents of three other students removed their children from that class, “saying it was humiliating for them.”

The incident comes on the heels of a protest this month by residents of an apartment building in the southern Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, who had refused to approve the opening of an educational center that would be able to accommodate children with special needs, according to media reports.

Earlier this year, the younger sister of Russian model Natalia Vodianova was ordered to leave a cafe in Nizhny Novgorod because staff said the young woman with autism and cerebral palsy was “scaring off customers.”

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