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Russia Denies Visas to Anglo-American School Teachers

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Russia has denied visas to more than two dozen foreign teachers at a school attended by the children of diplomats, the New York Times has reported.

Diplomatic tensions between Russia and Western countries resulted in the closing of the Anglo-American School's branch in St. Petersburg last September after 43 years in operation. The Anglo-American School in Moscow was founded in 1949 by the U.S., British and Canadian governments.

Related article: Anglo-American School in St. Petersburg Closes After 40 Years

Russia's Foreign Ministry has denied visas to 30 new Anglo-American School teachers in Moscow, the New York Times reported Tuesday, citing a letter written to Western embassies by a school board member.

"This will have a devastating effect on the school's ability to hire and retain high-quality, international teachers and staff," the school board member, Heather Byrnes, wrote.

An unspecified number of children will have to be turned away this school year starting Aug. 20, Byrnes' letter reportedly said.

Around 1,200 children from 60 countries attend the school, which employs 150 mostly Russian teachers.

The visa bans could be aimed at pressuring the United States into returning two Russian diplomatic compounds it had seized in New York and Maryland, according to Alexis Rodzianko, who runs the American Chamber of Commerce in Moscow.

"This, as I understand it, is a way to get the U.S. to move on getting those back," Rodzianko was quoted as saying.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow called the decision to deny the teachers visas "unfortunate" in emailed comments to The Moscow Times.

"Children should not be used as pawns in diplomatic disputes," it added.

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