

EDUCATION RAGE

AGONY

Pupils in health alert

PARENTS were this week warned of the symptoms of meningitis after a local schoolgirl was rushed to hospital with the dangerous disease.

The seven-year-old Whitley and Egborough Primary pupil was diagnosed with the meningococcal strain of the virus on Thursday night. By Friday parents of all 163 students at the school had been informed.

A village school spokeswoman urged parents not to panic. "Although it's not the killer strain, we got on to the health authority straight away to find out what we should do".

North Yorkshire Health Authority immediately

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By Stephanie Bateman

MONTHS of hell have ended for a man accused of raping a girl of 19 in Selby Park.

Charges were dropped on Tuesday and this week his family, who always protested Mark Dean Sheldon's innocence, spoke of their long anguish.

The 23-year-old from Haig Street, Selby, is now a free man after being accused of an alleged sexual attack in August. He faced life imprisonment if found guilty.

In a sensational turn of events, Mark's solicitor Fiona Stevens phoned him last week with news that the case would be dropped before town magistrates because of lack of evidence.

Mark told the Selby Times the three months since he was charged had been like hell, so when his solicitor called he was over the moon.

"I'd been hoping for something like that to happen but I didn't expect it. I expected the worst."

Mark's ordeal has only been made better because of the support of his family and his colleagues at Gateforth Park Ltd where he works as a fork lift truck driver.

"They've been great. They've all been behind me one hundred per cent. Now I'm going to try to put it all behind me."

Mark, who was barred from coming within five miles from Selby Abbey as part of his bail conditions, had been living away with relatives. But he wasted no time in moving back to his mother's this week and went out for a drink on Friday to celebrate.

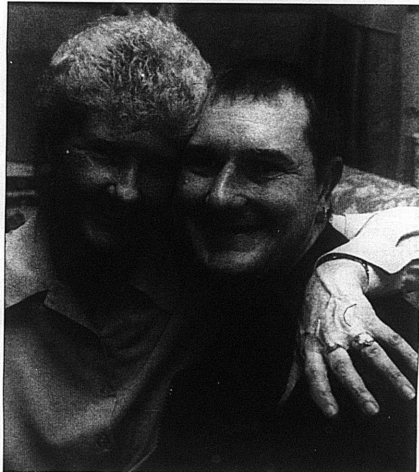
His mother Colleen also took the whole family — brother Craig and sisters Kerry and Tracy — out for a meal. The only one missing

was Mark's father Keith who is working in Nigeria, although he has been back to Britain several times to support Mark in court.

Colleen said: "We were ecstatic, we are all over the moon. But it has been terrible and nerve-racking. I've lost a stone and a half in weight, it's a good way to slim but I wouldn't recommend it to anyone!"

She added: "I wouldn't like anybody to go through what Mark and the family have been through."

But the battle is not over for the Sheldons. Colleen says it will take time to get over what has happened: "We won't just forget it in a hurry. We'll take each day as it comes."



Mark Sheldon and his mother Colleen celebrate the end of an ordeal. (XT7285/1)

Biggest drug bust in town

By Fiona Broomfield
SELBY Police this week hailed the success of their biggest drugs bust in town.

A team of 20 officers, led by divisional CID and force operations group staff, seized illegal substances with a street value of £4,000 in Monday's raids.

Two men in their early twenties were arrested and charged with supplying heroin. A further two arrests were made for alleged possession of small quantities of cannabis.

Sgt Andy Duffield from the

town-based divisional operational support unit said on Tuesday: "This is an excellent result."

The cache, believed to be the biggest ever recovered in the town, signals the latest success in a long line of investigations over 12 months.


Raids on eight local addresses as part of Operation Trent were launched at 11.30am with warrants executed under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Selby Police community liaison officer John Wardell congratulated officers on the successful drugs haul.

"It is good to see a positive result for all the hard work put in by officers. I can assure that the proactive work against illegal drug use will continue alongside work with local schools to educate young people about the dangers of drug abuse."

One man appeared before town magistrates on Tuesday, charged with supplying heroin. His case was adjourned to March 10.


Another man was released on conditional bail and will appear before the bench on Tuesday.



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Court rape ordeal over

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Crown Prosecution solicitor Mr Alan Mitcheson confirmed the case was being discontinued because of insufficient evidence, adding it would have been difficult to obtain a conviction.

He said police had carried out detailed inquiries and the decision not to proceed had only been taken after talks with police at senior level. Mr Mitcheson said it was felt it would be wrong to proceed with the case which would only be a waste of public money.

Colleen said that in spite of the family's relief, she was disappointed that Mark's name had not been cleared. She would have preferred an acquittal.

Mark's solicitor said yesterday: "I understand his family's feelings because obviously there will always be a question mark over the case. But, as far as we are concerned, his name has been cleared.

"He knew he was innocent, and we knew he was innocent. At the end of the day, the case being dropped early doors is the right result to prevent the family going through the trauma of a trial," added Mrs Stevens.

Selby Police acting superintendent Brian Outhwaite said: "Our aim is to an environment where people feel safe and that goes for victims and for those who have been accused when they haven't done anything. It's down to us to uncover the evidence, to discover the true state of affairs.

"I am quite pleased that the police have been seen to be completely impartial in this case which has been a traumatic experience for both parties."

The Sheldon family is now considering taking a civil action against the police or the complainant for compensation for the stress they have suffered.

Blaze