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Boy hit by vehicle while trying to evade group

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By Jason Bell

A Dakota Collegiate student hit by a vehicle in St. Vital yesterday afternoon might have been trying to evade bullies just before the accident.

School officials are investigating whether the boy was chased by other students before being struck at Bishop Grandin Boulevard and Dakota Street over the lunch hour.

The student, believed to be in Grade 9, suffered a suspected broken leg but was expected to make a full recovery.

A spokesman for Louis Riel School Division said the injured boy told paramedics he was attempting to get away from a group of kids prior to being hit.

"Paramedics indicated to our principal (Lisa Aitken) the boy may have been chased by other students," said Neill Johnson, the division's assistant superintendent. "(Aitken) will follow up with the boy and with other people who may have been there.

"At this point, she can't confirm it."

Contacted yesterday afternoon, Aitken referred all questions to the division office.

A police spokesman had few details, but confirmed the vehicle was westbound on Bishop Grandin when the boy was hit.

Investigators are still piecing together details of the collision.

An anonymous caller to the *Free Press* suggested the boy was first harassed at St. Vital Centre and then badgered while on his way back to school by a group of students.

Johnson said he's eager to find out what really happened.

"I'm always concerned when there's even a possibility of bullying. We need to find out what occurred," he said. "We'll investigate as we would with any possibility of violence or intimidation.

"If someone was chased, that's intimidation."

He said any form of bullying isn't tolerated at Dakota.

"We have Canadian and provincial codes of human rights... we have a right not to be harassed or intimidated," he said. "Our school system agrees with that."

In late October, the Doer government launched an anti-bullying television advertising campaign but pulled the program early when it was deemed a success.

Yesterday, Tory leader Stuart Murray and education critic Myrna Driedger criticized the decision to cancel the ad campaign and called for a reinstatement of the program.

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