

# 'Misfit' academic escapes jail term

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A PROMINENT academic who indecently touched a girl during a Jewish holy festival has escaped a jail term.

Benjamin Yudkin - whose father is a lecturer at Oxford University - was also caught with indecent images of naked youngsters on his computer and has admitted to a long-standing sexual fixation with children because he is a social misfit, Reading Crown Court heard.

But on Monday Judge Stanley Spence decided not to jail the 33-year-old.

He sentenced him to three years' probation and treatment at the Thames Valley Project for sex offenders.

Judge Spence said all indecent assaults were serious but that Yudkin, an orthodox Jew who is a specialist in genetics and mathematics, needed to continue the treatment he had been receiving voluntarily for years.

Yudkin, who now faces being ostracised by Britain's Jewish community, was described by Judge Spence as a "highly intelligent and articulate man" who was capable of bending the truth.

He had denied indecently assaulting the girl, who is from the Thames Valley.

The jury at his trial in June was told that he had been asked to lead the girl's family in prayer during the festival of Succot last October.

The court was told that he touched the girl's buttocks and thigh.

The previous month he had also taken his computer to an Oxford company to retrieve some lost data and pictures of naked girls were uncovered, the court heard.

Yudkin had admitted possession of the 13 indecent pseudo-photographs at an earlier

hearing, but a ban on reporting both cases was in place until his sentencing on Monday.

Paul Bogan, defending, said Yudkin, who still lives with his parents, had always found it difficult to make friends and this had led to an emotional attachment towards children.

Yudkin, who has twice attempted suicide, had realised his sexual feelings were inappropriate and visited a psychotherapist three times a week, he added.

He was receiving the treatment when he touched his victim.

Mr Bogan claimed the defendant had made "substantial progress" and that he had not touched the girl's genitals.

The computer pictures were not of sexual activity and Mr Bogan said this made both offences in the lower scale.

His treatment had already hampered his academic career and Mr Bogan said he would almost certainly be shunned by both the teaching fraternity and the Jewish community.

Judge Spence said the effect on Yudkin's victim appeared to be light but he added: "There was trust ... and you took that opportunity to touch the child in the manner that has led you to this court."

Although Judge Spence said he could "justifiably" send Yudkin to prison, he found the medical material and personal testimonials persuasive.

Yudkin will also be on the sex offenders' register for five years and must pay £1,234 in costs.



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