

# Former Adass Israel School principal sexually abused girls, court hears

- SHANNON DEERY
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Malka Leifer was headmistress of Adass Israel School between 2002 and 2008.

**GIRLS from an ultra orthodox Jewish school were routinely sexually abused by their headmistress who told them she was preparing them for marriage, a court has heard.**

Explosive allegations against former Adass Israel School principal Malka Leifer were aired publicly for the first time today in a lawsuit brought against her and the school by a former student.

The student alleges she and two of her sisters were abused by Mrs Leifer who “ruled the school with an iron rod” while she was principal between 2002 and 2008.

She told the Supreme Court today she was too fearful to complain about the abuse because of the power the former principal wielded in the ultra-orthodox community.

“She was seen as the head of the school and the whole community looked up to her and basically idolised her,” she said.

“She was seen as someone who was holier than holy,” she said.

The plaintiff, now 27, said she had complete trust in Ms Leifer and had felt “special” after the principal

took a liking to her and offered to give her private tuition.

She said she was told not to disclose the tuition to other students and said Mrs Leifer would take her out of class to abuse her at her home.

“I remember her being very scared her husband would come home and find us there. I remember her locking the doors.

“She I remember wondering if she realised what she was doing.

“She would tell me that she loved me and that she really cared for me.

“She would tell me it was her way of telling me she loved me.”

The Supreme Court heard that in line with strict orthodox beliefs the girl had never watched TV, listened to the radio, used the internet or read a newspaper.

She was segregated from males outside of her immediate family and had no sex education.

The girl said she was abused in Mrs Leifer’s office, her home and on school camps.

She said she believed other teachers knew about the abuse.

“She liked to hug me like a baby, and rock me,” she said.

“She said I should consider her like a mother who loved me, and that I was special.”

It is also alleged school officials failed to report allegations of abuse to police but instead allowed Ms Leifer to flee to Israel with her family just days after allegations were levelled at her in 2008.

She is currently under house arrest in Israel where extradition proceedings at the request of Victoria Police have started in an attempt to have her returned to Melbourne to face criminal charges.

It is understood Ms Leifer could face dozens of charges of indecent assault and rape.

The trial continues.