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Birmingham Post

July 17, 2007, Tuesday
1ST Edition

Teenager loses High Court fight to wear 'purity ring'

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 6

LENGTH: 377 words

Teenager Lydia Playfoot yesterday lost her High Court challenge over a ban preventing her from wearing a Christian "purity ring".

The 16-year-old claimed the ban at the Millais School in Horsham, West Sussex, was an "unlawful interference" with her right to express her Christian faith.

After the judgment from deputy High Court judge Michael Supperstone QC, Lydia said: "I am very disappointed by the decision this morning by the High Court not to allow me to wear my purity ring to school as an expression of my Christian faith not to have sex outside of marriage."

She said she believed the ruling "will mean that slowly, over time, people such as school governors, employers, political organisations and others will be allowed to stop Christians from publicly expressing and practising their faith".

Lydia is one of a group of Christians at the Millais School who wore the ring engraved with a Biblical verse as a sign of their belief in abstinence from sex until marriage. In court her lawyers claimed her secondary school, which allows Muslim and Sikh students to wear headscarfs and religious bracelets, breached her human rights by preventing her from wearing the ring.

The school denied her claims, arguing that the purity ring is not an integral part of the Christian faith and contravenes its uniform policy.

At a recent hearing at the High Court in London, human rights barrister Paul

Diamond, appearing for Lydia, argued that the secular school authorities had no right to set themselves up as arbiters of faith and "cannot rule on religious truth".

He argued the school authorities were violating Lydia's right to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion" under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The rings stem from the "Silver Ring Thing" movement which started in the US and led to impassioned debate over religious expression and sex education.

Dismissing Lydia's case, the judge said the school's decision did not breach her human rights.

He announced: "In my judgment, the school was fully justified in acting as it did."

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The judge refused the family permission to appeal, although they can still petition the Appeal Court to hear their case.

The judge ordered Lydia's father, Philip, to pay pounds 12,000 towards the school's costs.

LOAD-DATE: July 17, 2007

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Lydia Playfoot outside the High Court after she accused a school of discriminating against her Christian faith by banning her from wearing a 'purity ring'

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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