



The school, which is in Yueqing city, has also received harsh criticism from both parents and students around the country.

"To issue such rules based on the grounds that puppy love can affect someone's studies is ludicrous," said Mo Ding, a student at the middle school affiliated to Beijing University of Chemical Technology. "I know some couples, but they work really hard (in class) and actually encourage each other."

Xiong Bingqi, deputy director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute, a non-governmental policy research group, said schools should guide students' behavior, instead of simply trying to pose restrictions on their activities.

"I'm not surprised to hear the news at all," he said. "Many educators believe academic study is the sole aim of education, so such rules are not uncommon."

"What they (educators) fail to understand is that integrity of character and a healthy psychology are far more important for the education of a child."

Despite the controversy, Li at Yueqing Yucai School said the move is "well intentioned".

"We're aware of the many different voices, and in fact we're not even sure what effect the rules will have," she conceded. "However, all we have done is try to help our students."

Last year, a middle school in Baoding, Hebei province, issued similar rules.

Students of the opposite sex were ordered to keep at least 60 centimeters from each other while talking on campus, except during classes and school gatherings, and were allowed to meet only in bright, public places, according to local media reports.