Boarding school for troubled teens files for closure
By Jeff Barnard, Associated Press Write
Thursday, November 12, 2009 10:54 AM PST

GRANTS PASS — A boarding school for troubled teens that recently had its license suspended over allegations of abuse and neglect has filed notice it has closed and laid off 72 employees.

Mount Bachelor Academy in Prineville in Central Oregon filed the closure notice on the Web site of the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development.

Kristen Hayes, spokeswoman for the Aspen Education Group, which owns the school, said in an e-mail that officials had nothing to add to their statement last week denying the allegations.

The school had said it would seek a hearing to reverse the suspension of its license by the Children, Adults and Families division of the Department of Human Services.

Department spokesman Gene Evans said he had no new information on the case.

Triggered by a complaint, the state investigation found nine cases of alleged abuse and neglect involving five students since 2007. It gave parents a week to make other arrangements for their children.

Most of the allegations involved a treatment program called Lifesteps. Authorities alleged at least two students were forced to act out sexual roles in front of staff and other kids during treatment sessions; one had to act out past physical abuse; one was not properly supervised on a trip to Europe; and others were subjected to obscene and degrading comments from staff.

The school was established in 1988 in a rural area 26 miles outside Prineville.

Aspen Education Group of Cerritos, Calif., operates 25 programs in 13 states, including two others in Oregon.

The company calls itself the nation’s leading provider of therapeutic education for young people.

Mount Bachelor had 88 students and 75 staff members last March, the department said. Tuition is $6,400 a month. Students typically stay 14 to 17 months.