

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

DATE: 11th November, 1985.

INTRA - OFFICE MEMO

CONFIDENTIAL

REF. NO.:

MEMO TO:

FATHER DOYLE

Very confidential file

FROM:

SR. JOAN POWER

RE:

DOVETON

Father,

Alan Dooley has visited me this morning for assistance in resolving the problem I shall outline. I have promised to get back to him with some advice as soon as possible.

1. The situation

- 1.1 Father Searson calls all grades, except Gr. 6, to regular confessions (2-3 occasions per term). Gr. 6's are invited at 7.30 a.m. to the Presbytery or at other out of school times.
- 1.2 There is a replacement teacher, Mrs. Marie Brasher, in Grade 5. She has only been in the school this term but has a sister on the staff at Sunbury and has had other contact with places like Rupertswood where, she says, Fr. Searson was asked not to return.
- 1.3 Fr. Searson is returning from holidays and this Gr. 5 teacher understands that he will probably call for her children for confessions on this coming Thursday.
- 1.4 Fr. Searson has said to the teacher when referring to the children's confessions "when it starts to hot up I'll put on the tape".
- 1.5 There is one girl in the Grade 5 class whose parents have already asked that their daughter not go to Fr. Searson for Confession because she was so upset after Father made her kneel between his knees. This request has been respected.
- 1.6 Two other girls in the class do everything possible to avoid Fr. Searson as he always cuddles them whereas he pats others.
- 1.7 Because of what she has heard she has told Graham Sleeman and Alan that she wants to refuse to take the children because she believes "it is wrong to take the children into danger". She is concerned about possible psychological damage apart from any physical harm.

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2. Some reactions

- 2.1 After speaking with Graham, Alan believes that he is coming close to putting his job on the line by telling Fr. Searson that he is not prepared to allow the children to go to confession. Graham's wife, Jenny, says that he ought to "quit". He is growing tired of keeping the peace.
- 2.2 Alan has pointed out to both Graham and the teacher that while their concerns are substantial they are not substantiated and therefore it is difficult to take action.
- 2.3 Alan has talked through a number of possible responses that can be made when Fr. Searson arrives on the doorstep.
- 2.4 I have asked Alan to put his concerns in writing.

3. Some options

The options and consequences that are being mentioned at the moment are:

- 3.1 The teacher tells Father she is not prepared to take the children
- this will happen at the classroom door and there will be a scene;
 - teacher is likely to be "dismissed", children will be upset;
 - big fuss!
- 3.2 Graham tells the teacher:
- "We understand your concern. We'll send another teacher to the Church with you so the full responsibility of what might happen will not fall on you.
- 3.3 Another teacher is asked to take the children to Confession.
- Mrs. Brasher is relieved of the responsibility.
- 3.4 Alan is prepared to talk to Fr. Searson about the problem. He has had complaints from parents. He feels he has a reasonable working relationship with Fr. Searson.

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SIGNED: _____

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3.

Further information (from phone call to Alan 12.30 p.m. today)

Mr. Brasher, Marie's husband, has asked to be present when he and Marie are speaking today. The lady has been very worried and upset over the week-end. It is a conscience matter for her.

Alan is going to meet them and simply hear her story again and assure her that the situation is being given very serious consideration.

I would be grateful for your advice. I realise it is 'State Board and Liaison Committee week', but I would be happy to meet with you at any time convenient for you. Thursday is the confession day, so I have promised contact before that.

Many thanks,

Jean Lowe
11/11/85

SIGNED:

G. Steeman,
Principal.