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Dear Parents & Carers

Today in the Toowoomba District Court, former teacher Gerard Vincent Byrnes was sentenced to ten years imprisonment for sexual offences against children whilst a teacher at the primary school [redacted].

While today's sentencing may be the conclusion of the criminal proceedings, it does not mean the matter is finalised or the journey of healing is any way complete for the school community.

I again offer a sincere apology for the abuse suffered by children while under the care of the Diocese. I can only begin to imagine the suffering which has been experienced as a result of this former teacher's gross breach of trust and abhorrent actions.

Today I have again written to the victims' parents offering my apologies for the abuse suffered by their children and restating my offer to meet with them.

I am committed to ensuring that our apology is supported by action.

Former High Court Justice, Ian Callinan QC, has been offered as an Independent mediator to expedite the resolution of civil claims brought on behalf of the affected children. Pastoral care and counselling continues to be made available to all victims, their families and any member of the [redacted] primary community who wish to access it.

The Director of the Catholic Education Office, John Borserio, is continuing to make improvements to the child protection policies, procedures and training, in cooperation with the regulatory authorities.

The Diocesan Student Protection Officer, Shirley Ledger, is working with Toowoomba Catholic Education personnel to heighten their vigilance for child protection to ensure they remain fully aware of the procedures to be followed in the event there is a possible issue raised.

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It is the practice of the Diocese to direct people with any concerns regarding potential harm to children to contact the police immediately.

Across the Diocese a child protection visibility audit of all school classrooms and buildings has been undertaken and implemented.

Thank you for your continuing support of the school community. I offer my appreciation to Acting Principal, Mr Ron Rosentreter and our dedicated staff for their ongoing professionalism and commitment during this difficult time.

I recognise this is a difficult time for the entire school and my door continues to remain open to any member of the the primary community who would like to meet with me.

My thoughts and prayers continue to remain with you all.

Yours In Christ



**Bishop W Morris DD**