

REDACTED

VERMONT VIC 3133

2nd December 1992

Mr R Adams  
Principal  
Holy Family School  
DOVETON VIC 3177

Dear Mr Adams

Your letter dated 24th November, 1992, came as quite a shock, as you had previously given no indication of listed grievances.

Following our discussion on 25th November, 1992, in which you gave examples of your grievances, I have given them thought, and present clarification for the record.

1. If parents have complained, they have not been referred to me, and as you have not disclosed who they are, there is not much I can say.

Early in the year, one parent requested transfer of her child to another class when her child had been behaving inappropriately throughout the school environment and particularly in class. This was a most suitable request, due to the clash between two children who were vying for the position of "top-dog" in the classroom. I, too, have had complaints from parents gravely concerned about their children suffering, because of disruptive and aggressive behaviour, in the classroom and on the playground, from certain children with difficult problems.

2. I did not refuse to discuss a child's inappropriate behaviour with the child's parent. I expressed to you a reluctance to do so, and asked if you would consider attending to the matter. I received no indication that you would not. There were two reasons for my request. The first one is that this parent is the one most notorious in the school for confronting teachers, and often not in a pleasant way. Secondly, her child was not a member of my class, but of a class I was requested to oversee whilst a teacher was on an RE inservice for the afternoon. However, the following day when you asked me to see her I did so.
3. I did not name the child nor discuss the incident in front of the parent. Colleagues attest to this. After speaking with you about it after school, I went to the staff room and reported that you would deal with it in the morning. Unbeknown to me, the parent was sitting in the staff room, not the waiting area in the office. Colleagues indicated to me that she was present, and I quickly picked up their cue and entered into a brief discussion on a totally different topic. I then left the room after a few minutes, as I had night school to attend. If the mother intuitively sensed it was her child, I am not surprised, in view of the sequence of events surrounding this child's problem at the time. I understand your concern at potential for what you allege to have happened.

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4. A certain child was removed and sent to you more than once earlier in the year. Once a policy was developed between the Social Worker, yourself and myself of putting the onus on him, that policy was followed to the best of my ability thereafter.

The example given to me in our discussion on 25th November, 1992 was something another colleague organised, and as far as I knew, in conjunction with you.

5. The incident you mentioned in the above discussion also was being on the telephone after the bell at lunch time.

In response to requests from colleagues that as their Union Representative I contact the Union, before the first of recent industrial action. Colleagues had previously arranged to cover my classroom situation should the return call continue a little past bell time. I was not aware at the time that this was inappropriate, but will see that this does not need to happen again.

It has been a difficult year with problems both in school and out, bringing varied stresses, and with the many and varied demands of daily life it is not always possible to get everything right.

In my view, many of these stresses have their origin in our difficult economic times which often place an intolerable burden on many families. I believe also that these stresses are too often projected onto teachers, impacting ultimately on all of us in the school system. I admit finding this very difficult at times, however, I believe that we can and must work together to address these issues.

To achieve this, I believe we need to work harder together which means more open communication and co-operation. In our discussion on 25th November, 1992, you also alluded to communication problems in the school which need to be addressed. As I see the grievances in your letter pre-dominantly in terms of communication problems, I am keen to find more effective ways of communicating expectations, developing clearer guidelines, problem solving and planning. I am looking forward with optimism to working together even more effectively towards common goals of excellence in Catholic education at Holy Family School in the future.

Yours sincerely



CARMEL M GIDDINGS