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CATHOLIC EDUCATION OF  
OF VICTORIA

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4th January 1987.

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Father Doyle,

I am writing to advise you of an incident which occurred on Christmas eve during a discussion between Father Searson, Mrs Lalia McGrath, the Principal at Holy Family in Doveton and myself.

The meeting was called by myself at the request of Lalia following Father Searson's instruction to her after the closure of school for last year, to remove a teacher from the grade three position and replace her with another teacher. ( I have referred to this matter in previous correspondence to you.)

The meeting was held at the Diocesan Centre at 1.45pm on Christmas Eve. This venue was convenient for all as Father Searson had an earlier appointment in the city.

Lalia began the meeting by discussing with Father Searson her disappointment at what seemed to be his lack of trust in her in her appointment of a teacher to a sacramental class. She further explained that it had always been her responsibility to allocate teaching positions in her previous school and that she had not been expected to consult with the Parish Priest. Father Searson explained that it had always been his experience that the principal consulted on grade appointments, particularly where they involved sacramental classes.

I drew his attention to the Parish Handbook statement where it states that the Parish Priest is responsible for employment of staff, but the principal is responsible for the allocation of duties.

We asked Father if he had any particular reasons for not wanting this teacher in the grade three and he indicated that he had observed less than desirable practice on the part of the teacher in the Church with her children during 1987. He indicated that

would however be happy for the teacher to take a composite grade 3/4, as long as another teacher took the straight grade three. I pointed out a contradiction here and said that I could not see how, if he was not happy with her in grade three that he could allow her to take a composite involving grade three children.

After a small amount of discussion I attempted to sum up the situation. I said that both he and Lalia had acted in accord with their experience without either knowing the expectations of the other. I further indicated that to instruct Lalia to remove the teacher from the grade three would greatly undermine her authority and would pose a very difficult situation in regard to explaining it to the teacher. I suggested that perhaps we should discuss future expectations for the placement of teachers and suggested that he might publicly support his Principal on this occasion whilst letting her know that in future he expected to be consulted. This was a position that Lalia would be happy to accept. At this point Father Searson stood, addressed me by saying that I was obviously not neutral in this matter and that he would seek counsel and take the matter up with a higher authority. He left the room.

Lalia and I then discussed the matter with Mr. Frank Rogan of your office.

Later that evening Lalia had the opportunity to wish Father Searson a 'Happy Christmas' and at this time he apologised to her and said he hoped that matter would resolve itself.

Mrs Lalia McGrath has been extremely upset by the events which lead up to and took place on Christmas eve. She was much more relaxed after the apology, but the situation still remains to be resolved. The question of class placements needs to be clarified and it is my belief that the contradiction in class placement to a grade 3/4 composite needs to be addressed further if a change is to be made. It is Lalia's position that if Father still insists on a change that he should inform the teacher in Lalia's presence.

I am particularly concerned at the timing of Father Searson's instruction on the last day of school and for the stress that has been placed on Lalia's shoulders. For myself, I will seek to visit Father Searson during this week, with the view to opening up communication again and it is my hope that the position outlined above involving public support, but consultation in future, can be agreed upon.

Lalia has written a letter in regard to the events and her letter outlines in more detail some of the discussion which took place and her feelings about the matter. Should you require any further information please let me know and I shall keep you informed of any progress in regard to this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allan Dooley".

Allan Dooley  
Educational Consultant.