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AD:CL
26th February, 1987.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE
OF VICTORIA

Wantirna South Group
Suite 2, 173 Boronia Road,
Boronia 3155

CONFIDENTIAL

Rev. T.M. Doyle,
Director,
Catholic Education Office,
P.O. Box 146,
EAST MELBOURNE. 3002.

Dear Father Doyle,

I am writing in regard to Holy Family Primary School, Doveton, and wish to express some concerns that I have at present in regard to the current state of affairs at the school.

At present we have established a management committee for the school, which comprises myself, Father Searson, Mrs. Shirley Barrett, who is the Acting Principal, and Miss Anne O'Brien, who is a member of staff. We meet on a weekly basis and make decisions of a general and specific nature re the ongoing development of the school whilst Mrs. McGrath is on sick leave. Whilst this arrangement has progressed reasonably well, there have been a number of matters which have caused me concern, although it is difficult for me to isolate any one particular problem, other than an uneasy feeling of unhappiness which exists at present among some of the community at Doveton.

This unhappiness has arisen from a number of different actions in which Father Searson has been involved, none of which on their own would merit any great attention. Parents have spoken with me about his approach to those who have not paid school fees and one family in particular has removed their children from the school because of his manner. There has been a considerable drop in enrolment in the school (-28 on the July census) and it is difficult not to believe that many of these transfers have been a result of the conflict last year, or of certain actions this year.

Over recent months, Father Searson has often consulted with me in regard to important decisions, however, he proceeded whilst I was on leave, to decide certain matters after discussions with Mrs. McGrath, the new Principal. Whilst this would normally be a way to proceed and a cause for no concern whatsoever, the matters on which decisions were being made were indeed very controversial in some instances and, in fact, contradicted understandings that were given to staff in 1986. Once again, the incoming Principal has the right to make such decisions, however, Father did not inform Mrs. McGrath of the controversial nature of the decisions and, as such, left many staff wondering why Mrs. McGrath would make such changes without consultation. This was particularly the case in deciding the use for a portable classroom. I have advised Father to notify you of the use to which the portable is being made and believe that he will do so in the near future.

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I have raised the matter of decision-making with Father Searson, and requested that he think, more carefully, about process decision-making before proceeding with what he knows to be controversial matters.

I believe that he has misled a number of people in regard to the debt of the school and various public statements have been brought to my attention in regard to this matter. In one statement he informed a group of people that the debt was in the vicinity of \$23,000. The school has a very serious non-school fee collection problem from last year, and it would appear on the surface that it is about the same as the anticipated debt level, but the accountant has not yet informed us of the exact amount, although he estimates about \$8,000.

He may be naive

I could discuss many other matters of concern, however, the major purpose of this letter is to let you know that I am not happy with the progress that is being made at present, even though I acknowledge that the school has had a very difficult start to the year, given that its new Principal is on sick leave. I do have a good working relationship with Father Searson, and I am confident that such will continue. Perhaps in this way our support can be meaningful and real for Father Searson, the staff and parents. This support, however, does not seem to be able to stem the rising concern which is again becoming evident within the community at Holy Family.

I haven't written this letter with any particular follow up action in mind, but rather have noted these thoughts as my reflections on the current state of affairs at Holy Family. In concluding, I wish to acknowledge the very fine work that Mrs. Shirley Barrett is doing in her capacity as Acting Principal.

I shall continue to keep you informed should there be other matters which arise.

Yours sincerely,

Allan Dooley,
Educational Consultant.