

Telephone: 222 1157

CONFIDENTIALCATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE
OF VICTORIA

AD/CL

20th November, 1985.

Wantirna South Office
Kingsley Terrace
7B/426 Burwood Highway,
Wantirna South 3152Rev. T.M. Doyle,
Director,
Catholic Education Office,
P.O. Box 146,
EAST MELBOURNE. 3002.*Spoke with
Mrs. Lunn who
indicated that a
formal complaint would
need to be lodged by the
parents - be advised by the
office. J. 24/11/85.*

Dear Father Doyle,

I am writing to give you details of a couple of conversations which have transpired between Father Searson, Graeme Sleeman and myself.

Last Friday, November 15th, Graeme and I met with Father Searson to discuss the subject of a phone conversation that I had with a parent of a child at Holy Family Doveton. The parent had indicated concern about what they saw as a sexual advance to their daughter by Father Searson during Reconciliation. Graeme had also received a similar phone call.

In raising this matter with Father Searson, I explained that we felt that as a matter of honesty between him and us that we should inform him that the conversation had taken place. His reaction was not one of surprise and he indicated that priests were often subjected to such comments and that he was aware that these sorts of things were being said about him at the moment. He indicated that he was taking steps to ensure he did not place himself in situations where misinterpretations could be placed on his actions and that since an instance when a girl sat on his lap he had ensured that all children remained seated in the chair opposite him and that there was no physical contact.

He enquired as to the identity of the parent who had made the complaint and I indicated that this was a matter of confidentiality, and in fact, it wasn't so much a complaint, but rather a discussion of how the parent was feeling in regard to the situation. He once again reiterated the care that he was taking and assured us there was no truth in the comment whatsoever. We then went on to discuss some other business in regard to the school.

On Monday, November 18th, I received a phone message to contact Father Searson and did so by phone in the evening. During this conversation Father Searson asked me again if I knew the identity of the person who had contacted me, and whilst initially I did not commit myself, I later in the conversation, once again, reiterated that I knew the identity but I was respecting the confidentiality requested.

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He indicated he had spoken with his solicitor and that the person could be subject to an action in law and that in fact he implied I could be asked to divulge in law the name of the person involved. This somewhat surprised me and I expressed serious concern to him that our relationship, and the basis on which I had approached him in terms of integrity and trust, could be taken advantage of by him insisting on a release of the name. I said I hoped this would not eventuate and that I could still feel free to raise matters confidentially. I also indicated that the nature of the conversation I had with the parent did not result in a formal complaint and that had a complaint been formalised by the parents then my course of action would have been different. He understood this and the conversation did not proceed on this issue past that point. He did, however, request if I had further conversations with parents that I inform them of the serious legal implications of such actions. I replied that in any matters such as this I always draw attention to the very serious nature of the matter that is being discussed. We affirmed our level of trust in one another, in terms of the sharing of information and open discussion of issues, and concluded on that note.

I had occasion to call in at the school on Tuesday 19th November, and was once again spoken to by Father Searson. Whilst indicating that he was not worried about the matter in any way he made it clear to me that if he were to find out the identity of the people involved, or if there is any further conversation, then he would take legal action to protect his reputation.

For myself, I am happy that communication is still alive and well between Father Searson and myself, but I am concerned about the on-going relationship between Graeme and Father Searson, as I believe that the stress that Graeme is experiencing is taking its toll on him personally and professionally. I am not sure that there is much else I can do at this stage other than offer continuing support on a regular on-going basis to Graeme.

If I can be of any further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours faithfully,



Allan Dooley,
Educational Consultant.