

Our ref: Y/2003/11

16 December 2003

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19 DEC 2003

Dear Mr Cujes

**Re: Ombudsman Audit of Trinity Grammar School on 10 and 11 September 2003.**

I am writing to provide you with our final report in relation to the Ombudsman Audit of Trinity Grammar School.

Thank you for your detailed response to our provisional statement of findings and recommendations issued on 14 October 2003. We have considered your comments in our final report.

This letter and the attached document 'Ombudsman Audit Assessment', constitute our final report and recommendations from the audit.

### **Audit Findings**

The audit interviews that we conducted showed that there was a high level of dedication amongst staff for the well-being and education of the students in their care. We were impressed with the culture of openness and commitment to continuous improvement at the school. We were also impressed with the positive and holistic approach of the school to the students' education and pastoral care. The success of this approach was apparent from our interviews with the students. They stated that they felt safe at the school, and that there were sufficient staff support networks in place for them to be able to raise any concerns they had.

The school had worked hard in implementing positive strategies to minimise the risk of child abuse and bullying within the school environment, and creating a culture where students, parents and staff felt comfortable in reporting any concerns.

The school has a proactive approach to keeping parents and guardians informed and involved in decisions affecting their sons, particularly where the school had identified particular concerns about a student.

The staff manuals and handbooks included comprehensive information on what was required from staff and students, as well as being a clear induction manual for new staff.

The 'Pastoral Care and Discipline Guidelines' contained detailed information for staff about the school's philosophy, their rights and responsibilities as teachers as well as what they could expect of students. In addition, there was useful information about guiding the students towards acceptable behaviours through positive strategies and a merits system.

Staff displayed a good understanding of practices that are inappropriate in the workplace and were clear about their responsibility to report allegations of child abuse against employees to senior master. Staff morale appeared high and staff felt supported in their work by each other and by management.

The school demonstrated that it is committed to good practice and ensuring the safety and welfare of the students in its care. We have made some recommendations for the school to consider. These are detailed more fully in the attached document 'Ombudsman Audit Assessment'.

We make the following final recommendations:

1. The school reviews and updates its child protection policies and procedures within five months of receiving our final audit report.
2. The school develops a central complaints register within one month of receiving our final audit report.
3. The school includes in the 'Parent Handbook' information that outlines who the parents or guardians may contact if they have concerns about staff.
4. The school develops guidelines to address the potential risks associated with any contact between students and staff members outside the staff member's professional capacity within five months of receiving our final audit report.

I noted that in response to our recommendations, the school has:

- Established a central complaints register,
- Included in the 2004 'Parent Handbook' an additional paragraph that outlines who the parents or guardians may contact if they have concerns about staff, and
- Has developed preliminary guidelines to address the potential risks associated with any contact between students and staff members outside the staff member's professional capacity. In addition, a committee has been formed to address this issue in more detail.

We note your comments about the legislative changes that are currently being debated in the NSW Parliament, and agree that it is appropriate for the school to wait until the amendment to the legislation is commenced before reviewing the section of your policies and procedures that deal with the types of matters that need reporting. We will provide you with information regarding the legislative changes once we have had an opportunity to consider them.

We will contact you again in April 2004 to review your progress with these recommendations. In the meantime, please contact us if you have any questions about the recommendations or require our assistance in the future. We will also provide you with more detailed information about the amendments to the child protection legislation once we have had an opportunity to consider them.

Again, I would like to thank you and your staff for your cooperation during our visit to the school. I also encourage you to complete and return the 'Audit Questionnaire' that I have enclosed with this letter. It contains questions that are designed to assist us with the evaluation of our audit process.

Any feedback that you provide would be greatly appreciated. If you would like to discuss any of the matters raised in this letter or in the attached documents, please contact Kate Jonas on 9286 0904 or Teresa Law on 9265 0415.

Yours sincerely



Anne Barwick

**Assistant Ombudsman (Children & Young People)**