



1913

P.O. Box 174,
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Trinity Grammar School

Head Master, G.M. Cujes
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M.A.C.E., M.A.C.E.A., F.A.I.M.

OPEN LETTER TO TRINITY PARENTS

For immediate media release

Tuesday, 6th February 2001

"Boarding House Incident"

Dear Parents,

The past months have been indeed traumatic for all of us here at the School. The admissions made by three of our former students have come as a great shock to the close knit Boarding House community. We know that you, and the entire Trinity School Family, are sharing our very real pain and grief at recent events.

The boys who have pleaded guilty to these acts will not be permitted to return to the School. We will however continue to be supportive of them and their families, as we have endeavoured to be throughout this period.

That certain individuals could participate in such grossly unacceptable behaviour in the Boarding House is a severe embarrassment for all of us. We feel deeply for those boys who have suffered as a result of this. Our hearts go out to the victims. We will continue to give every assistance in helping them recover from this ordeal. Their continuing pastoral care is of paramount concern to us.

Media reports have spoken of a "culture of bullying" at the School. We reject that accusation. We believe these were isolated incidents by some individuals, and not part of any "culture". No evidence was tested in Court that supported the allegation of a "culture of bullying" in the Boarding House.

In dealing with this situation within the Boarding House, we need to keep in mind that the overwhelming majority of our 1850 boys have not been involved, and should not be denigrated in any way. We are concerned with activities confined to a very small number of boys who were unable to control their bullying behaviour.

It was because of our existing Trinity reporting systems that this matter first became known. Senior boarders brought to the School's attention the bullying incident that was initially reported. The teachers intensively interviewed students, and further sensitive investigations were made by our School Counsellor. It was those inquiries, which led to the conclusion that there was a notifiable incident. Immediately that conclusion was reached, the matter was reported to DOCS the same day. From that time on the whole matter was controlled by DOCS and the Joint Police/DOCS Investigative Team. The School was directed by DOCS not to communicate in any way with parents and boys involved. We certainly wanted to do so, but we were told it could "corrupt the

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H:all daily correspondence/post verdict draft letter



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investigation."

Police and DOCS officials involved in the investigation took full control of the investigation and subsequent events.

At all times the School has striven to act in the best interests of all the boys. It has also met all its obligations under the relevant Child Protection Legislation.

A Report by the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) has endorsed the efforts taken by the School:

"It would appear that appropriate services have been put in place for the victims, witnesses and their families to assist them both in the interim and in the future. The school has taken the appropriate measures to ensure the students safety and well being". (JIT)

Now that the Government agencies and the Court have completed most of their responsibilities, it is up to the School to take the necessary steps to ensure we all learn from this painful and negative experience.

What does Trinity intend to do about this from now on?

Our aim is to establish Boarding House procedures that will be regarded as best practice in the field of student residential care. We hope to develop and share whatever solutions we find.

The School Council and Head Master are urgently examining the following measures:

- the appointment of an Independent Expert to review current Boarding House practices
- moving the Middle School Boarders (Years 7 to 9) to separate accommodation at Bishop Chambers House
- the ongoing implementation of our existing anti-bullying programmes
- anonymous surveys of the boys so they can even more readily report any disturbing incidents
- research and consultation with agencies developing the latest in anti-bullying policies from around the world

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- strategies that will further enhance the safety, security and happiness of all boys at Trinity.

Like all schools, Trinity is by no means perfect. Our ongoing and unquestioned commitment is to the educational and pastoral care of our boys. The fact that the School continues to achieve excellence in a wide range of activities, testifies to the fact that the majority of our boys are happy, safe and secure, and are being well cared for in a Christian environment.

It is in difficult times like these, that we must not be distracted from our principal reason for being. Responsible reaction to these events, compassion, understanding and forgiveness are all now required.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for all the support offered to the School by the wider community during this difficult time. The School Staff, Parents & Friends Association and the student body have been most supportive and we will actively involve them in the measures outlined above.

The School will continue to keep you informed as to how we all move forward from this situation.

James Mills
Chairman, School Council

Milton Cujes
Head Master

Bruce McGrath
President, P & F Association

For further media inquiries please contact:

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