

KNOWL VIEW RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL



Report to Mrs. D. Cavanagh

17th April, 1991

Following the meeting on Thursday 11th April, with the Social Services Department and various representatives of the Education Department, it was felt that the furniture and decoration of the school and the living areas should be considered alongside staffing ratio and increased security of the site.

I feel the following detailed proposals have been discussed at length and are agreed in principle but require immediate action.

The living areas of the school are cold, institutionalised and inhospitable, but with a little change and imagination could have a tremendous effect on the children's behaviour and avoid a recurrence of serious incidents at Knowl View School.

The units at the moment are organised on an open dormitory system with very little privacy and no area that a child can call their own. If the units were made into double bedrooms, this actually in 3 units means; 4 partition walls, with doors, and 2 partition walls in the fourth unit. The cost of this alteration is very small but the improvement to the child's environment would be tremendous. The units have not been decorated for some 6 years and with the type of youngsters we have at Knowl View the wear and tear is beginning to show. I would recommend that the units redecoration is made a priority.

The furniture in the living units was deemed unsafe by the fire officer as were the curtains. Consequently the chairs were removed but replaced by plastic chairs, this was 2 years ago. The whole look to the "lounges" on the units with plastic chairs and fluorescent strip lighting is very institutionalised and not helping in changing pupil's behaviour. I would recommend that furniture and curtains be purchased and the type of lighting used be changed, so the children can actually have somewhere safe and pleasant to relax.

There are a number of small repairs to wardrobes which could mean that children had somewhere to put their clothes and hang items up rather than pile them into a cupboard. A few other areas could be de-institutionalised at very little cost, for example individual shower curtains would allow the children some privacy, at the moment all bathroom facilities seem to be communal. The presence of toys and games in the living area can turn the living areas from units into homes. The present number of children seems to have somehow reached a ceiling of 36, I feel that with the necessary input and the purchase of another 12 beds the numbers would soon rise to 48.

I would also like to consider extra lighting for the rear of the building, this need not necessarily be extensive or elaborate just another fitting outside each doorway.

I am well aware of the financial restrictions placed upon us as an