

Since Mr. Bradshaw took up his position as headmaster there has been one incident which could be described as sexualised. I am satisfied that this incident was one of common horseplay between boys and was dealt with appropriately: there has been no recurrence.

Information from Rochdale police during the summer of 1991 was that, although surveillance at Smith Street toilets was continuing, there was no longer any homosexual activity going on there and certainly none involving any of the boys from Knowl View School. At that time the police had no intention of pursuing any line of enquiry involving any of the boys at the school, but were very prepared to become involved should further information come to light.

Information Directly Received from Staff

Although all care staff in the school were very willing to talk with the author, nevertheless the majority wished those conversations to be held in confidence. The information so received will, therefore, be reported as an amalgam of opinions, perceptions and feelings of the staff.

There were particular concerns about communication, not only between the care and teaching staff but also within the care department itself; for example, the fact that the intruder had been seen within the school grounds was not reported to night care staff on all the units. Indeed, that information was not available to some members of staff until many days after the intruder had actually been caught within the school itself. Another example cited of poor communication was that children were admitted to the school without details of their background being available to care staff. In particular one child, who had been an in-patient in an adolescent psychiatric unit, was admitted with nothing known of his past history despite the fact that he had a very long and complex background of serious abuse.

A further concern was to do with the recognition and management of sexual behaviour in adolescents. As a result of the past events many of the care staff had lost confidence in their judgment regarding teenage sexual behaviour. Certainly many people also expressed the view that they needed advice about that and training on how to manage situations involving sex. An extension of that concern was an awareness by some staff of very different personal views about sexuality and the relevance of certain forms of sexual behaviour. This has led to considerable ill feeling between members of staff: on the one hand some people felt that others had not taken seriously enough the behaviour that had been occurring between the boys; others felt that such behaviour was within normal limits, or at least was a normal stage of development for boys in an institutional setting.

On the whole care staff felt ignored and rejected and felt that they had been employed to "look after" and to take the blame when things go wrong. They had expressed concerns in the past but as nothing had happened it had tended to reinforce their view that they were not valued. There was no training budget for them although they were keen to undertake training. Generally speaking there was an air of cynicism among the care staff and a loss of confidence in the school management.