

## DRAFT COPY OF A REPORT ON KNOWL VIEW

9.3.92

April 1991 - April 1992

### Historical Factors

Knowl View was opened in late 1969 and has had two Headteachers since that time not include the present. In 1987 Mr Cooper, Deputy Headteacher and Mr Hopwood both had a period of sickness of approximately 18 months before retiring through ill health. Their posts were filled by a number of people 'acting up'. In 1989 Brett Andrews was appointed as Deputy Headteacher and immediately asked to assume the position of 'acting Headteacher'. This has left the school without a substantive Head and clearly lacking in leadership and direction.

There have been a number of incidents dating back as far as 1981, mentioned in the log book, of a sexual nature but rarely are these incidents resolved, just mentioned. The regime was certainly oppressive, male orientated, with coercion being the main form of control. The staff culture developed into what it is today over a number of years and has been reinforced by factors both internally and externally. The children also developed a similar culture that is well documented in the log books.

The staff culture was one of differing factions within the staff group, not working together, rather scoring points against one another and intentionally tripping colleagues up. There was certainly an attitude of 'the world owes me a living' permeating through the building and a concerted effort to do as little as possible. The morale was low, groups were manipulated by one or two individuals, appointments were kept to Rochdale based friends or partners, sickness levels were high as were claims for overtime. Many staff had little or no experience of other residential schools and the school had developed an inward looking approach and poor practise was reinforced.

The curriculum as a whole did not exist, just individual pockets of work, there was no communication system nor a recording system. The teaching and care staff groups were completely divided and worked separately to such an extent that when one group walked into the staff group the other group would walk out. This culture was one of the few things that had adopted a whole school approach, it involved everyone who worked at Knowl View. There were no regular



meetings, no records kept up to date or procedures available to follow, everything was passed on by word of mouth.

There is still evidence of this culture continuing today, for example when Marilyn Simpson met the teaching staff to outline the legal obligation and reinforce what the Head was saying, most teachers felt that the National Curriculum was not for them and they dismissed the HMI visit in October as being inaccurate. There is still a great deal of work to be done.

The children's behaviour seemed to be symptomatic of this staff culture and at times this behaviour was reinforced by the staff unknowingly. For example, 3½ years ago Rod Hilton was charged with sexual offences against pupils at Knowl View. Yet he was still known to stay around the school grounds and the children were allowed to go and smoke in an area that Hilton visited regularly and was the exact place he had committed offences on children before. Children from one of the younger units were also allowed to spend time in Rochdale unsupervised despite staff being aware they were getting involved in incidents at Smith Street toilets. The incidents of bullying for sexual favours goes back as previously stated to 1981 and these incidents were still occurring according to the log book in January and February of 1991.

The communication was poor within the staff group with some members of the staff team not being aware of major incidents happening in the school. The Governors were not kept fully informed and for a long time thought that things were relatively calm. Some staff found difficulty through their own perceptions of sexuality in deciding what was normal adolescent sexual exploration and what was deviant sexual behaviour. When the staff group did ask for assistance they did not find a sympathetic 'ear' and lost confidence in the school leadership and the LEA.

#### EVENTS and ISSUES.

It is with this background, on piece by piece discovering, that the school set to rectify and rebuild. There are four main areas of development;

- a.) The Care staff
- b.) The Children
- c.) Confidence in the school
- d.) The Teaching staff

The vacancies on the Care Staff team were filled by August of 1991 including two waking care staff posts. Although due to budgetary restrictions we have recently had to lose two of these posts.