

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE

MEMORANDUM

FROM: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION TO: J F D PIERCE
Chief Exec & Town Clerk
REF: ED5/DLC/KA COPY TO:
NAME & EXT: Diana Cavanagh : 5000
YOUR REF: DATE: 8th May 1992

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

KNOWL VIEW SCHOOL

I am writing in response to your memo of the 1st May 1992 to update you on the situation at Knowl View School and on the actions taken following the receipt of Mrs Valerie Mellor's report.

A : ACTIONS TAKEN

13th March

Mrs Mellor presented her report to the group of LEA officers and elected Members who have met regularly over the past eighteen months. The report was accepted without hesitation and in its entirety. At my request the Headteacher and the Adviser for Special Education drew up a parallel document which gave an account of how far Mrs Mellor's recommendations had already been discussed or acted upon. I attach a copy of their report to this memo.

At Mrs Mellor's suggestion a second report was provided which deleted some of the references to the previous caretaker: we were advised that wide distribution of this information might prejudice any possible prosecution of the caretaker by the Police.

I would stress at this point that only those officers with a close involvement in the situation have retained copies of the report: all other staff and elected Members have returned their copies to me.

27th March

A meeting was held at the school of all staff (teaching, care and admin/clerical staff but not manual staff). Again Mrs Mellor presented her report and there was considerable discussion of her findings. Some staff expressed the concern that no individuals had been identified as being at fault and therefore the whole school was to shoulder the responsibility.

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1st April

Special meeting of the Governing Body to consider the report. This was attended by myself and Anne Taylor on behalf of the Chief Executive and Town Clerk.

Following the meetings above, proposals were made to offer further counselling to any parent or ex-pupils who might wish to receive it and to provide a 'listening ear' to any staff who felt anxious about their particular feelings about the incident. The Governors also urged myself to seek money from the Capital Programme for the remodelling of the dormitories into small bedrooms: this is clearly desirable and would have helped to prevent the kind of incidents that occurred and make supervision more effective.

24th March/2nd April

Discussions with the Chief Education Officers of Manchester and Tameside, both of whose Authorities currently have pupils in the school. They have received and retained copies of both versions of the report and of the account of actions so far taken. They have also received an invitation to discuss the situation with Mrs Mellor and to visit the school, should they so wish. I have had no further comments from either Mr Jobson or Mr Webster.

9th April

Discussion with the professional officers of related services (Social Services, Police, Health Authority: Probation Service invited but did not arrive). The poor communication between these services and the school and the Education Authority was a major difficulty in the situation. Neither the school nor the Authority had any information regarding the activities of pupils outside the school premises until several months after the incident in September 1990 and boys were still being referred to Knowl View without any information arriving either at the school or to the Education Authority about their previous history. In some cases it would have been obvious that these boys should not have been placed at Knowl View, had the information been available.

These difficulties are now being actively tackled. The Governing Body are very sympathetic to the proposal that the Chair of the Education Committee should be able to attend by right (although not a member of the Governing Body) and that one of the co-opted Governors should be a nominee of the Director of Social Services. I understand that Jane Held, Assistant Director, would be likely to be the nominee and her role in the implementation of the Children Act would make this highly desirable.

14th April

Meeting with Chief Superintendent, John Houghton. I was accompanied by Alan Eastwood. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the situation regarding the caretaker. The Chief Superintendent stressed that there might be one of three outcomes:

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- (a) sufficient evidence to pass the papers to the Crown Prosecution Service with a subsequent charge and possible conviction
- (b) sufficient evidence to pass the papers to the Crown Prosecution Service but insufficient evidence to lay charges
- (c) insufficient evidence to lay before the Crown Prosecution Service.

I understand that we will eventually receive a communication from the Police regarding the outcome.

B : OUTSTANDING ISSUES

Buildings and Equipment

- 1 Remodelling/equipping of the building to a more home-like environment and one capable of being supervised more effectively.
- 2 Equipping of curriculum areas to enable the implementation of the National Curriculum, following the comments and advice from HMI at their visit in October 1991.

NB: Both 1 and 2 would be modest projects: the school is outdated (dormitories), shabby and poorly equipped but not unsound or completely inappropriate.

- 3 Investigation into the role of the staff

A number of staff have left since the September 1990 incident and new appointments have been made. At the meeting with staff on the 27th March it was apparent that some staff were keen to have their names 'cleared' and, by implications, have others singled out for blame. Since a number of accusations seem to be being passed around, I recommended to Councillor Moffat that we should hold a final investigation solely on the role of the staff in the events of 1990. This has been discussed with the relevant Unions, and the Chief Adviser and EO (Special) with ^{the} statements from all staff next week to establish whether there is any new information and, if so, whether it can be substantiated.

Staff will be briefed about the arrangements on Monday 11th May, in the presence of the Unions.

- 4 Review

Mrs Mellor will visit the school again early in 1993 to assess progress on the recommendations in her report. There will also be termly reviews by the staff and the Governors on progress.

- 5 Training

There is no funding available for essential training eg. on Child Protection issues for care ^{or} staff. Although efforts are being made to accommodate staff on other courses (eg. Social Services) it will not provide the level of upgrading required.

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I would be very happy to provide you with any further information you may need or to discuss the contents of this memo. I trust this is of assistance.