

Reception

From: Durell
Sent: 26 August 2010 12:06
To: 'Rodney Fox'
Subject: RE: St B

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Rodney,

Thank you for a very comprehensive response. We'll keep you posted.

With best wishes,

Durell

Durell Barnes

Head of Communications

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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Registered in England. Registration No. 06458829

From: Rodney Fox [mailto:DPA]

Sent: 26 August 2010 07:12

To: Durell

Subject: Re: St B

Dear Durell

Thank you for your further email about St Benedict's.

The information that was provided to inspectors by the school about the child protection situation there is, of course, not just a matter of my recollection but of the evidence that you have called in, recorded in both my and Rob Sharman's notes and particularly in our pre-inspection commentaries. However, as you have requested my recollections, they are as follows.

With respect to Father DP, I was not informed but have subsequently read in the newspapers -

(i) that he had been under a restricted covenant because of previous concerns about his behaviour; (ii) that he had been involved in a previous civil action in 2006 when substantial damages were awarded to the victim; (iii) that he had been accused of offences dating back to 1972 which involved 8 pupils and that there was a history of complaint about him; (iv) that he had at one time been head of the junior school.

What I was told by the head was that one of the monks had been accused (and subsequently convicted between my first and second visits) of an offence which took place off school premises in the monastery DPA and which came to light when the victim, who happened to be a pupil, complained through the school's child protection procedures, which led to the incident being reported and investigated. The head commented to me that the incident was a vindication of the effectiveness of the school's CP procedures. It is now evident that what I was told was only part of the truth with respect to Father DP.

When Rod Sharman made his first visit, which was later than mine, he was told a bit more by the junior school head - viz that there was a second monk RC-F41 who had been charged with offences a few years back and acquitted of them, but whom the Abbot had deemed it appropriate to place under a restrictive covenant because he had residual concerns (this was the only use of a covenant that was ever discussed with us), and that there was a former teacher at the senior school (described as head of middle school) who had been convicted of offences. When I asked the head for more details about these cases he told me

(i) that [RC-F41] was now very old, not allowed to come into contact with the pupils, was innocent rather than devious and caused him (the head) no concerns; (ii) he said that he knew very little about the former teacher as it had all happened before the head was in post (but the ISI follow-up report seems to suggest that the conviction of this man was much more recent than this response led me to understand and the newspaper report refers to convictions on three occasions and ongoing inquiries).

Neither Rod Sharman or I was told about any other concerns or complaints. We were not told about the several independent reviews of the school's child protection policies and procedures that were evidently taking place (eg the charity commission review, the diocesan review, the Benedictine review), although we were told (and so were the parents via a circular letter and website notice) that the Abbot had invited an independent review of the steps being taken by the school to minimise future risk.

We asked to see independent support from the reviewers for the appropriateness of the measures being taken to secure the protection of the children from the remaining risk, which we understood to be chiefly the continued presence of [RC-F41] in the monastery under a restricted covenant agreed with the Abbot, since Father DP was now in prison and the former teacher had not been involved with the school for many years. This evidence I was shown by the Abbot who produced a formal legal document which he said had been required to be drawn up by the independent reviewers who, so he said, were in full possession of the facts about [RC-F41] and had also been given access to a psychiatric report on him.

In the light of the above, I cannot agree that inspectors were provided with a full and accurate account of the situation at the school. I also believe that, although this was not a fully expressed finding of the ISI follow-up inspection, the real failure of compliance seems to have been that of the head in not reporting to the DfE or ISA the various cases that had led to members of the monastic community or teachers being barred from access or ceasing to work in the school in circumstances that would have provoked further enquiries and concerns had they remained. Had this been done, in accordance with statutory requirements, then we should not have gone to inspect this school with no information about the situation there other than what the school chose to reveal to us. If it was done, then the failing lies with those agencies for not sharing the information appropriately.

I will wait with interest to hear what action ISI decides to take with respect to all this. I am not happy about what has occurred and wonder whether it merits some form of complaint to HMC about one of their members, a person who I found congenial on a personal level and who mostly seems to be doing a very good job, as was apparent from the school's excellent inspection report. He was, however, evidently not completely frank about the situation at the school, possibly out of deference to the Abbot (also a former head of the junior school), for whom he clearly has a great respect, which may have inhibited what he felt he could tell us.

I hope that this helps.

Rodney

----- Original Message -----

From: Durell

To: Rodney Fox

Sent: Wednesday, August 25, 2010 4:53 PM

Subject: St B

Dear Rodney,

I am in discussion with the head about his handling of the follow-up report. He has stated that he feels he was open about these issues, informing the inspector(s) in November 2009 specifically about Father P and generally about others. Does this accord with your recollection?

As ever,

Durell

Durell Barnes

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