

We discussed the issue of risk management and that it is not possible to eliminate all risks. However, as the charity regulator we would expect to see that the trustee body had considered the risks associated with a particular course of action. During our meeting we discussed the issue of the trustees satisfying themselves that they had taken sufficient steps to mitigate the risks of Father Pearce's presence at Charity premises. Throughout the meeting it did not appear that the trustees had given sufficient consideration to the historic allegations made against Father Pearce and the civil verdict and award of damages against him.

In the course of this discussion Reverend Shipperlee acknowledged that it was his responsibility to monitor Father Pearce's activities within the Charity. It was also acknowledged that in light of the most recent allegations against Father Pearce it was clear that Reverend Shipperlee had failed to monitor adherence to the restrictions placed upon Father Pearce. It is questionable whether it would ever have been possible to sufficiently monitor Father Pearce's activities in the Charity. In hindsight it would have been a better option to have removed Father Pearce from the Charity to remove any risk he may have posed. This is particularly relevant in light of the unique circumstances in which Father Pearce established contact with the alleged victim.

We note the comments made by the trustee body at the time of our meeting expressing the view that by allowing Father Pearce to remain at the Charity it would be possible to monitor him. However, as was recognised at the meeting this was not possible and limiting his role failed to prevent contact with vulnerable young people. This failure resulted in the Charity and potentially, vulnerable beneficiaries, being exposed to serious risk. Despite the recommendations of the Diocese of Westminster it is the Commission's view that the trustees did not go far enough to mitigate the risks posed by Father Pearce's continuing presence at the Charity's premises and that his earlier removal from the Charity would have been more appropriate given the nature of the allegations and the history behind them.

Reputational Risk:

During our meeting I raised the issue of the reputational risks to the Charity as a result of Father Pearce's arrest and the news articles that appeared in the media. We were encouraged to see that the trustees had taken steps to protect the reputation of the Charity and to address concerns of parents of pupils at the school by explaining what actions had been taken by the Charity. This included releasing a statement through the Charity's solicitors and writing a letter to the parents of every pupil to explain what had occurred and the steps taken by the trustees in response to Father Pearce's arrest.

A charity's reputation is one of its biggest assets. As such we would expect the trustees to take measures to protect the reputation of the Charity in the future. As a minimum we would expect the trustees to monitor carefully the outcome of any criminal investigation or prosecution or civil claim into Father Pearce or any other person involved with the Charity in a similar capacity and to take appropriate steps to protect the Charity's name and reputation as necessary. We would also expect the Charity to take reasonable steps to defend its name and reputation if any charges or proceedings were initiated against the Charity. If such a situation were to arise, I would suggest that you contact the Commission for advice.

Inquiry Report:

During our meeting I was asked whether the Commission would be publishing an inquiry report following the conclusion of our inquiry. As discussed previously, I stated that it is the Commission's policy to publish the outcome of all inquiries unless there are exceptional circumstances existing.