



St Benedict's, Ealing

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Bursar Catherine de Cintra BA, ACA

Mr G Eales
Charity Commission Direct
PO Box 1227
Liverpool
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Date: 13 November, 2006

Your Ref: **DPA**

Dear Geoff,

The Trust of St Benedict's Abbey, Ealing: 242715

Thank you for your letter dated 27 October 2006.

Fr David Pearce

The Trustees first became aware of accusations against Fr David Pearce in October 2001, when the Abbot (i.e. the Chair of Trustees) was approached by a member of staff who passed on comments made by a former pupil. The Abbot met this pupil. The accusations were historic relating to alleged events some ten years previously. Fr David himself had ceased to work in St Benedict's School in 1993 when he became bursar and he retired as bursar in 1999. Since that time he has worked only in the monastery. Since 1993 therefore, he has had no unsupervised access to children.

The Abbot took the accusations immediately to the Archdiocese of Westminster Child Protection Service, who advised that the matter should be investigated by the police whom they contacted on the Trust's behalf. During the subsequent investigation the Abbot was advised that Fr David should have no knowledge of the police investigation and so no further action could be taken. The police decided to take no further action.

In January 2004 the Abbot was contacted by another former pupil who made further similar, though unconnected, accusations relating to the early 1990's. The Abbot took the matter to the diocese, although in any event the former pupil decided to go direct to the police himself and told the Abbot that this was what he would do. In the light of these developments the diocese requested that Fr David should have no access to children, which had in practice been the case for a number of years, and should be suspended from any ministry out side the monastery. Therefore the Abbot asked Fr David to step down as a trustee, which he did in April 2004. The police decided again not



to prosecute and so the complainant sued Fr David and the Trust in the civil courts leading to a judgement against the Trust and Fr David in June 2005.

RC-F41

In the case of RC-F41 the Abbot was contacted by the diocese in April 2005 and informed that allegations had been made against him and that although the police had decided not to press charges he should be placed under the same restrictions as Fr David. RC-F41 had had no role in the School since 1989 and had retired as Parish Priest in the autumn of 2004. Thus he had no access to children. RC-F41 stepped down as a member of the Monastic Council in DPA and took no further part in Trustees meetings. His formal resignation as a Trustee was recorded in September 2005. The same complainant made additional allegations a year later and this time the police instituted criminal proceedings.

In child protection matters relating to the religious community and parish the Trustees follow the procedures issued by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster. Nowhere in those procedures does it suggest that the Charity Commission is informed of allegations of child abuse. Indeed to do so might constitute acting outside the agreed procedures which are designed to place the highest priority on protecting children and young persons. If you think that the Charity Commission should be informed in such circumstances then might I suggest that you take up the matter with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster with a view to their child protection procedures being changed. In respect of the School, child protection procedures are governed by the Department for Education and Science.

I have enclosed extracts from the ISC inspection of the Junior School in 2003 and the ISI inspection of the Senior School in 2004 concerning pastoral care. There are no concerns about child protection measures.

Please let me know if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

DPA

Catherine de Cintra
Bursar