Dear members of the St Paul’s School community,

As Parish Priest I wish to bring to your attention matters that have been of concern to me since a number of parents, at my invitation, aired various issues in recent weeks. In fact I must say at the very least I am very disappointed and saddened by the way some parents behaved. It is hard to believe we are members of the Catholic community.

These matters were brought to the attention of Mr Chris Robarts, the Regional Consultant of the Catholic Education Office and together we discussed them with Mrs Cornelia Conway Weel, the Principal. We found that most of the issues had been raised earlier and been treated at School Leadership Level, Staff level, by the School Board, by the principal herself and by me when applicable. Over time these issues have been answered in writing and evidence of such was given.

Sadly, it seems some parents fail to read the newsletters, letters to parents, attend information sessions and so do not seek to understand the explanations given, ask no questions, and then do all they can to undermine the leadership of the school as they seek to have things “their way.” Rightly so you will understand then, is the dismay and frustration of the Principal, the Core leadership team, the School Board, the staff and myself as we are faced with such hostility over issues that have been dealt with in the correct manner.

As parish Priest, I am the employer of all staff in the schools for which I am responsible. In the case of the Appointment of the Principal, Diocesan Policy asks that I seek community advice prior to my making an initial appointment. The use of an advisory panel is important here. The matter of an on-going appointment is a private matter between myself as employer and the Principal concerned. This being the case, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the matter of Mrs Conway Weel’s on-going employment as Principal of St Paul’s.

However, during our review of these matters, it became clear that there is room for the school to improve and clarify the procedures through which parents make suggestions and voice concerns about school operations. There is also scope for the school to be more effective in the way it communicates with the school community. I have asked that the school give these matters serious attention. In case you do not have or have misplaced your copy, a copy of “The Communication Protocol” is attached for your information and guidance. The school is only too happy to receive constructive feedback on issues raised through this channel.

Sadly change is not acceptable to some. Sometimes you may not have agreed with the decisions or the policy reached but realistically you have to adjust and move on, as we do in many things away from school. The same issues can’t be raised over and over again. Where does that get us? We have to trust in the goodness and expertise of those who run our school. I am grateful to the majority of parents who do just that, and who offer their understanding and encouragement. We have a very competent and dedicated Principal, Staff and School Board who give of themselves wholeheartedly to the education of our students. And for that the parish, the diocese and myself are grateful. St Paul’s is a great school.

Let me state that I have never been a principal, but in my earlier life I taught in primary and secondary schools for some six years, been a school chaplain, have been on School Boards, a member of the Diocesan Schools’ Board, employed countless teachers and principals over my thirty eight years as a priest. So I do appreciate that decisions affecting the life of any school community are complex and not taken lightly as the views of so many have to be respected, including staff, parents, students, the Catholic Education Office, the parish and the diocese. Decisions are made for the common good according to the teachings of the Gospels and the policies of the Diocese. Having employed the principal and the staff at St Paul’s I have full confidence in them and the work entrusted to them.

I trust and pray that in all our dealings, we can be sensitive to the other person’s point of view and work for consensus outcomes. This will lead to greater understanding. Thank you for taking the time to read and reflect on what I have written about certain issues. May the good Lord bring to completion the good work we have begun in his name.

Yours in Christ,

Tom Brophy, Parish Priest
Communication Protocol for All

1. Queries or questions asked
   Refer to appropriate staff member
   eg classroom teacher if concern regarding your child in class, yard etc

2. If not satisfied or require further clarification
   Refer to member of Leadership Team
   Cornelia Conway Weel, Andrea Cox, Jacinta Burge, Lys Crowe, Leah Kennedy, Sommar Briggs, Kathryn Byrnes

3. If more information is required
   Refer to member of Core Leadership
   Cornelia Conway Weel, Andrea Cox, Lys Crowe, Jacinta Burge
   Core Leadership will consult with
   Principal and/or School Board (as appropriate)

4. If not satisfied at School Level
   Refer to Parish Priest (Fr Tom Brophy)
   Parish Priest will consult with
   Principal (Cornelia Conway Weel) and CEO Regional Consultant (Chris Robarts)