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Press Complaints Commission

From the Chairman

14 January 2004

David Cameron Esq MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear David,

Thank you very much for your letter of 8th January about Martin Morris's concerns over the restrictive guidance he has been given about the publication of pupils' names alongside their photographs.

It may be little consolation to Mr Morris, but this sort of advice to schools in both private and state sectors does seem to be widespread at the moment. I visit editors all round the UK and this is one of the subjects which is at the top of their concerns. They say that for many years the practice of matching names to faces in papers passed without incident, and brought pleasure to pupils and parents alike. Their jobs, they say, are now made increasingly difficult by the demands of schools and local authorities over what sort of information should be published.

Our Code of Practice – which affords school children a high degree of protection from intrusion – makes clear that 'pupils must not be approached or photographed while at school without the permission of the school authorities'. It does not say that if such permission is given, names should not accompany the photographs. Such a policy would normally be a matter for the school to make in collaboration with the parents. It is difficult to know how to advise Mr Morris. One thing he might consider is to consult the school's parents and see how they feel. And to what extent is BSA guidance the result of consultation among boarding schools? If the answer is not a lot, perhaps the time has come for the schools to agree a collective policy.

Meanwhile, if Mr Morris would like to talk about any issue relating to the Code of Practice – a copy of which I enclose – then please do ask him to telephone my colleague William Gore on 020 7353 1248.

With kind regards.

*Yours ever,
Christopher Meyer*

Sir Christopher Meyer

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