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## HS Chaplain Suspended Accused of Abusing Boys While Queens Parish Priest

By Derek Rose and Robert Ingrassia  
Daily News  
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The popular chaplain at Bishop Kearney High School in Brooklyn was suspended yesterday, several days after his name was put on a list of priests accused of sexual misconduct with minors.

The Rev. James Collins, 57, chaplain at the all-girls school in Bensonhurst, is accused of molesting boys while serving in a Queens parish before his assignment to the school in 1984, according to a source familiar with the allegations.

Officials with the Diocese of Brooklyn, which encompasses Brooklyn and Queens, and the Queens district attorney's office declined to detail the old allegations.

Collins served at four Queens parishes between his ordination in 1969 and his assignment to Bishop Kearney.

"He is presently on administrative leave, which means he's not permitted to perform any public ministry, such as saying Mass or performing confession," said Frank DeRosa, a diocese spokesman.

Collins was among the priests accused of misconduct whose names the diocese forwarded Friday to prosecutors, a source familiar with the list told the Daily News.

The source described the allegations against Collins as "several and serious."

Had athletic duties

Collins also served as the school's athletic director and softball coach. He worked at the school until noon yesterday, when he left to meet with Bishop Thomas Daily, said school principal Sister Joan McAvoy.

DeRosa declined to say how long the diocese has known of the allegations against Collins or explain why he wasn't put on leave until yesterday.

Students leaving school yesterday said they had not heard about Collins' suspension. They described the priest as a friendly and approachable man.

McAvoy said she knew of no allegation against Collins stemming from his work at the school.

"He is impeccable," she said. "I know a very good man who's been here a very long time. As Bishop Daily said, there are allegations and there are actions, and we have to differentiate between the two."

Bishop Kearney is the latest institution caught up in the escalating child sex abuse scandal rocking the Catholic Church. At least 10 priests in New York City and Long Island have been suspended over past allegations of misconduct, while dozens nationwide have been stripped of their priestly duties.

The suspension is another blow to a school touched twice by tragedy in recent months. One student lost her father, a firefighter, in the World Trade Center attack, and another student lost her mother and brother when American Airlines Flight 587 crashed Nov. 12 in Belle Harbor, Queens. The school's

assistant softball coach also was killed in the crash.

After both tragedies, Collins helped console students, McAvoy said. He attended funerals to support those affected by the disasters, she said.

Before working at the school, Collins served at St. Michael's Church in Flushing, St. Clare in Rosedale, Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Forest Hills and St. Margaret in Middle Village.

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