

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**John CUMMINGS**

Support person present: No.

1. My name is John Andrew Cummings. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### **Background**

2. I have a BA from the University of Kent, a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from Nottingham University and a MA from London University.
3. In 1972 I completed Voluntary Service Overseas in Papua New Guinea and between 1973 and 1975 I was a member of the Drama in Education Team, Dovecot Arts Centre, Stockton. In 1975 I took up a teaching post at Glasgow Academy and remained there until 1980. In 1980 I commenced another teaching post at Tonbridge School, Kent and I remained there until 1989. During my time at Tonbridge, in 1985, I was on an exchange with Melbourne Grammar School, Victoria, Australia.
4. In 1989 I became Head of English and Sixth Form at Wycliffe College, Gloucestershire and I remained there until 1993 when I became Headmaster at Keil School, Dumbarton. I remained Head at Keil until 1999 when I became Headmaster and Chief Executive of M.O.D. Agency, Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover.

### **Employment with Keil School**

5. My position as Headmaster at Keil School commenced in April 1993 and ended in September 1999.

6. I had seen the job advertised in 'The Times' Educational Supplement and submitted an application along with three references including from my employer at the time, Wycliffe College.
7. I was invited to visit the school to meet staff and pupils and I had an interview with members of the Board of Governors and an independent assessor, who was Head of a Scottish Independent School.
8. At that time I was a registered teacher with the Department of Education and Science (DfES). In due course I became a member of the Heads Association of Scotland (HAS), the Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS), the Society for Headmasters and Headmistresses of Independent Schools (SHMIS), and the West of Scotland Heads Association (WOSH).
9. As Headmaster, my line managers were the Chair and the Board of Governors. Mr Hugh Kennedy succeeded by Dr Sarah Orr were the respective Chairs of Governors. Other Governors during my time at Keil included: Mr Andrew Mackinnon, Professor Neil Graham, Professor Joe Thompson, Mr Bob Skinner, Mr Ken Thompson, Mr George Bruce, Mr Ian Weir, Mrs M. Miller, Mr Calum Macdonald, Mr Donald Leckie, Mr David Sutherland, Mrs Bidwell, Mr Macaulay and Mr Mackenzie. By way of liaison with them and in addition to Board meetings, there were regular informal meetings and phone calls. There was no formal system of appraisal that I can recall.
10. There was no formal training given me by the school. I had been a member of the Senior Management team during my last year at my previous school. I had a comprehensive [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] Mr CGC [REDACTED], and SHMIS organised training for new Heads, which I attended. To my knowledge there was no specific child protection training for new Heads. In addition, I shadowed one of my friends who was a Head in another school.

## **Policy**

11. I had ultimate responsibility for policies in relation to care, including the residential care of children.
12. My predecessor had created an efficiently run school catering both for boarding and day pupils. New policies would be discussed and reviewed at the appropriate monthly Heads of Departments or House Staff Meetings or during In-Service days. Policies did change over time particularly those in regard to co-education, which was comparatively new to the school, and a Child Protection Policy would have been introduced following a course run by SCIS, I believe in 1994/5.
13. Recruitment of staff was done through CVs, references and interviews. Candidates were invited to visit the school in advance of a potential interview. Teachers would be expected to have a relevant degree and teaching qualification. 'List 99' police records were also checked. Registration with the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) or DfES was also expected. Although registration with the GTCS was not checked, to my knowledge, there would have been a discreet registration number which would have been declared.
14. There would not have been a specific child protection policy in 1993 when I arrived; to my knowledge Child Protection Policies as such had not been introduced at that time. Child Protection procedures would have been subsumed within more general policies regarding safeguarding, bullying and welfare of pupils.
15. A Child Protection Policy was introduced following a course run by SCIS in either 1994 or 1995. SCIS produced a model policy, which the school adopted. Staff, pupils and parents were informed of the policy and the Deputy Head became the Child Protection Officer. In addition to various handbooks, prospectuses and timetables, a comprehensive handbook was created for all pupils entitled 'School Discipline and Routine'. Within that handbook was a section entitled 'Comments, Suggestions, Problems and Complaints'. I was not aware of specific Child Protection Policies in other schools and therefore cannot comment on how Keil's policy compared.

16. Concerns and complaints would be dealt with at the appropriate level either through the Matron, Evelyn MacLean, House Staff, a member of teaching staff, the Deputy Head or the Head. A complaint or concern would be listened to and dealt with according to the seriousness of the issue. It would be escalated up the 'chain of command' if needed. For example, a complaint that might go to the Matron would often fall into the category of a concern. There would have been matters where medical confidentiality would be maintained. If Matron felt it appropriate or necessary she would raise the issue with House staff or the Deputy Head or myself. Additionally, pupils, parents or staff could go directly to the Deputy Head or the Head.
17. Children would know who to speak with if they had a complaint as it was outlined in the School Discipline and Routine Handbook which was issued to every pupil and parent. Serious pupil disciplinary matters would be discussed at House Staff Meetings and I would consult with the Chair of the Board and report formally to the Board.
18. The same would apply to the rare occasions when staff had to be disciplined, when I would consult with my Deputy Head and also with the Chair of Governors. I believe that there was a Staff Handbook, which contained the school discipline policy for staff. Expectations and general notes on conduct would have also been included in contracts of employment.
19. Whistleblowing wasn't a term I remember being in use in the workplace then. The equivalent would be if a matter was raised with the Deputy Head / Head or taken directly to the Chair of Governors.
20. Staff records were kept securely by the Head's secretary and contracts were kept with the Bursar, who was Mr George McGuire assisted by Mr Jack Southern. Pupil records were kept securely in a safe and there would be additional pupil records kept by House Masters, House Mistresses and Tutors.

## **Strategic Planning**

21. I had overall responsibility for strategic planning in the school. Child protection did feature.
22. Much of the strategic planning focused on making the school an attractive proposition for potential pupils and their parents. We lacked the resources for grand facilities and focused on creating a friendly and supportive environment where pupils were encouraged to do well academically and had the opportunities to participate in a range of activities outside of the classroom.
23. I cannot recall precise numbers of how many children there were. In general terms the school roll was a maximum of 220 and ranged between 190 and 220. The age range was 10 to 18. Boarding numbers gradually declined from circa 70 to 50. Day numbers increased together with the number of girls in the school. The day pupils benefited from the boarding ethos and the pastoral care, with their own tutors and house staff and communal areas. We developed the day side of the school, creating better communal areas for the Day Houses and opening a P6 class.
24. On the residential side I inherited four boarding houses, which comprised two boys' houses, a junior boys' house and a girls' house. The junior boys' house was old fashioned dormitory style accommodation. At the end of my first year this was converted into a house for day pupils plus a classroom for 'Transitus' (Year 7) pupils.
25. We tried to move increasingly towards study style bedrooms for the senior pupils but there were physical constraints with the buildings. We introduced the roles of House Mothers in the two Boys' Boarding Houses, to enhance the pastoral provision.
26. Security and safety were high priorities with all residential pupils. There were clear rules and boundaries set and outlined in handbooks for staff and parents. Pupils needed to be accountable to residential staff for their movements at all times.

27. On the academic side we put an increased emphasis on academic performance. When I joined the school I introduced, amongst other things, an enhanced grading, assessment and reporting process. All pupils were frequently graded. These followed monthly meetings for all staff at which each pupil's progress was discussed. There were termly reports on each pupil which covered academic work, a pastoral report from House Staff and reports on the extra-curricular activities. There was greater accountability and progress could be readily charted.
28. A new Art and Technical block was built.
29. On the activities side, a wider range of sports and activities was introduced. Rugby had played a dominant part in the school and whilst it still had a part to play, the range of sports increased together with music, drama, outdoor pursuits, local community projects, and educational outings. Oratory competitions, the Keil lectures and work shadowing were introduced. This was influenced in part by the increasing number of girls in the school plus a desire to give a wider range of opportunities and interests to all pupils.
30. In 1994 we developed a School Development Plan involving governors, staff, parents and pupils. The aim was for the school to enable pupils to 'make a valuable contribution to society...within the context of a family atmosphere.'
31. Communications improved when I joined. A Newsletter, which went out termly to all parents, was introduced, updating them on events and developments and the School Magazine had a dramatic facelift, thanks to a very skilful member of staff. The School Prospectus together with all our internal documentation was overhauled and made more accessible. Parents became more involved with the school thanks to the Friends of Keil organisation, and pupils became much more involved with the local community.
32. I started daily staff briefings and weekly meetings with senior pupils. A Student Council was created with pupil representation from every year group. Potential pupils and parents were shown around the school by existing pupils. I held over sixty presentations at various locations throughout Scotland where existing and potential

parents could meet me and other members of staff and pupils and find out more about the school.

### **Other Staff**

33. I had overall responsibility for the staff in the school, but the Bursar had more direct responsibility for the small number of non-teaching staff. Day to day management was delegated, with Heads of Department being responsible for the members of staff in their departments and House Masters and House Mistresses for their Assistants and Tutors.
34. I worked closely with the Deputy Head, Tom Smith, who had direct responsibility for the academic side and the routine day to day running of the school. We had a relationship of complete confidence – discussing issues and sharing ideas on a very regular basis. Quite simply, if anything happened to me Tom Smith had to be able to take over immediately. There were no tensions to my knowledge. Tom Smith was an extremely able and experienced educationalist and administrator whom I respected.

### **Recruitment of Staff**

35. I was involved with the recruitment of all teaching staff. I would not be involved with all non-teaching appointments.
36. Recruitment of teaching staff followed the recognised procedures of independent schools. Whilst, not necessarily formalized as such, it was the way, as later explained, in which independent schools operated in my experience and to my knowledge. In other words – letter of application / C.V. / and formal interview. The formal interviews would involve myself / Deputy Head / Head of Department and any other relevant member of staff and would include a comprehensive visit to the school, meetings with key staff and possibly teaching a lesson.
37. I recall recruiting a House Mistress externally, however recruitment to positions within the boarding houses was done internally. An internal appointment would still require

a letter of application and a formal interview. Ideally for such a position we looked for someone with existing boarding school experience.

38. The procedures for recruitment followed general good practice in schools following advice from advisory bodies such as Scottish Council for Independent Schools / Heads Association of Scotland and Society of Headmasters and Headmistresses of Independent Schools.
39. Once recruited, staff signed a contract which was comprehensive in stating the expectations and conduct expected.
40. References were always obtained from previous employers or from relevant tutors if a teacher was still training. In addition to teaching ability the references were meant to cover all aspects of character, reliability, resilience, trustworthiness and potential commitment to a boarding school ethos and generally these aspects were covered. The fact that a number of references were sought meant that you gained a comprehensive picture and if there were doubts or questions a phone call would be made.
41. Wherever possible referees were spoken to, particularly if a candidate was currently employed in a school.

### **Training of Staff**

42. I was involved with training and staff development.
43. Staff training was not formalised unless the member of staff was still on probation as a teacher. The first year of teaching at the school was regarded as probationary and a full-time contract was conditional upon this being successfully completed. There was a staff handbook and the immediate responsibility for induction and training would rest with the line manager. I would have informal discussions and also observe teachers in class.



44. This became more formalised as staff development became more recognised in teaching. I cannot put a precise date on when that was, but there was a general awareness in the teaching profession in the 1990s that staff development and appraisal needed to be more structured. As far as I can remember, staff development became formalised at Keil, but I struggle to remember precise details, although I do recall observing classes and reporting back to staff.
45. Personal development and appraisal were in their early stages at that time.

### **Supervision / staff appraisal / staff evaluation**

46. I was involved with staff appraisal and evaluation of staff.
47. A formalised process was in place for probationary teachers, which was part of their registration process and was a documented process. Appraisal was delegated to the relevant line manager / Head of Department. I observed teachers in the classroom and on their general duties around the school, including taking activities and in the day or boarding houses.

### **Living arrangements**

48. I lived with my wife and family in a detached house on the edge of the school grounds. The nearest boarding house was about 100 yards from the house.
49. Other staff, if they were House Masters, House Mistresses or Assistants, lived in separate accommodation either adjoining or within the boarding houses. There were also two detached houses used by the House Mistress in the Girls' House and by the Assistant in one of the Boys' Houses. The rest of the staff lived within a reasonable commutable distance of the school.
50. House Masters, House Mistresses, Assistants and Matron had access to the boarding houses. Other members of staff and visitors would seek permission to access a

boarding house from them. Additionally, secure coded entry systems and intruder alarms were fitted to the boarding house entrances.

### **Culture within Keil**

51. Keil did not fit into the normal boarding school mould. Parents did not send their children to Keil for status and few had been to an independent school before. For those from the Highlands and Islands who did not have easy access to secondary education there was a real need for boarding. Whilst the mixture of boarding and day pupils worked well, it was the boarding ethos that predominated. This ethos encouraged pupils to support, help and look out for each other creating a strong sense of community and a pride in the school. It was a solid, well run school.
52. The HMI report (1998) commends: 'The school's ethos / the very open relationships among pupils and between them and staff / the staff's strong commitment and concern for the general welfare of residential pupils / a good variety of leisure and recreational activities and the encouragement given to pupils to become involved in the life of the community'.
53. I wanted to build on the ethos of respect for each other and of mutual support. With the recent arrival of girls there was no place for the remnants of a macho culture.
54. To some Keil was still synonymous with rugby success. I wanted to continue to raise the standards in academic success and to expand the range of activities on offer. Plays, concerts, lectures, a wide range of sports, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Young Enterprise, charitable and social events, together with inter-house competitions, all played an increasingly large part in a busy school.
55. My aim was to make the school, were I not Head, a place where I would be willing to send my own children. One of my aims was to make it a warmer and more civilized place and to move away from, what I perceived, as a somewhat macho culture. It was in keeping both with my own philosophy on education and also complemented the

recent introduction of girls, which I knew from my previous experience brought a beneficial change of culture.

56. The HMI Report (1998) stated that: 'The head teacher had a broad vision for the school, demonstrated a strong commitment to the overall welfare of pupils and had made several important changes since his appointment'. I think this was both because we set high standards and because of a change in leadership styles at staff and senior pupil level.
57. I wanted to downplay the need for punishment. As in family life I believed that a fair, compassionate and disciplined environment should seldom require the need for punishments. In 1995, for example, I introduced a Student Council with twelve democratically elected pupil representatives from each year group. It became very pro-active.
58. In setting high standards, rather than emphasise the need for discipline, I wanted the staff and senior pupils to lead by example and encourage positive behaviour, rewarding pupils for achievement and effort. We were fortunate to be able to recruit some fine new young staff during my time at the school, including Sarah Guy, Angus Mair, Heather Kirkpatrick, John Stuart, Elspeth Brown, Suzanne Lynch, Marion Murray, Julia Sillars and Susan Bilsland.
59. I know what I wanted to achieve and that was to emphasise and applaud achievement and merit in academic work and many other activities. It was as important to acknowledge effort as achievement. I did this through my regular whole school assemblies; through the merit system; through Headmaster's commendations followed by letters to parents; through Form, Effort and Subject Prizes; mention on the Headmaster's notice board; awards on Speech Day and the awarding of colours for sporting achievement. The latter was expanded in a different form to include celebrations of music, drama and art. When I first arrived, there were good things happening in the school and I wanted to expand on them.

60. Fagging, which I understand in a school context to mean where senior pupils made juniors do favours for them, did not exist.

### **Discipline and punishment**

61. Pupils were disciplined by members of staff and by prefects who were known as 'Chiefs'.
62. There was no physical form of punishment at the school. There was a formal policy in relation to discipline and punishment and staff, pupils and parents were made aware of the policy through various handbooks and through the 'School Discipline and Routine' handbook for pupils. In short it was an understanding that actions have consequences.
63. The policy was summarised in the statement 'You are expected to act with consideration, courtesy and respect for other people, their property and the environment. Pupils must do nothing likely to bring themselves and their school into disrepute. Any form of bullying is completely unacceptable. You must obey the law.'
64. Sanctions included what was called 'Natural History' (NH), which was tidying the estate, by detention, by what were called 'satis cards', which had to be presented to every teacher at the end of lessons for poor academic effort, and by suspension from school or expulsion.
65. Records were kept. Detention lists and NH rotas were drawn up by the Deputy Head and satis cards by individual teachers and Heads of Department. Suspension and expulsion were overseen by the Deputy Head and Head who would be in contact with the parents and additionally with the Chair of Governors in regard to expulsions. Records of expulsions would be kept on a pupil's individual file. They were kept securely in the Head's Secretary's office whilst the pupil was at school and in a locked safe once they had left. I'm not sure how long they were kept for. They were certainly kept for the possible duration of pupils completing Higher Education and gaining employment.

66. Prefects did have a small disciplining role, but it was a very limited one and one where they were held accountable and carefully overseen by the Deputy Head. It is difficult to assess what went on before, however the emphasis of their role during my time focussed on assisting House Staff, organising events, helping new pupils integrate within the school and being alert to pupils who were clearly unhappy. I wanted seniors who were in positions of responsibility to view their roles more as ambassadors for the school. They were in positions of responsibility to assist staff, to be generally helpful, and to help control school gatherings and organise events.
67. I wanted to ensure that leadership was based on personal example, that senior pupils took any roles they had in a responsible and accountable fashion. The HMI Inspection (1998) commends as one of the school's strengths: 'The contribution of senior pupils to the life of the school ... (they) were encouraged to lead by example.'
68. It was certainly not the case that "the pupils to a large degree ran the school, in the sense that they did much practical work like cleaning and that discipline out of class was very much left to the chiefs, etc." Nor would that have been something that I or staff would have encouraged or tolerated.
69. I met weekly with the senior boy and girl to discuss with them any concerns they may have and vice versa. The Deputy Head and house staff liaised closely with senior pupils particularly those in their individual houses. I established a Student Council with democratically elected pupils from each year group which was chaired by the Senior Pupil.

### **Day to day running of the school**

70. I was involved with the day to day running of the school, which in practice meant being responsible for the school twenty-four hours a day during term time.
71. I hoped that by setting high standards of behaviour and by being clear to parents, pupils and staff through policies and various communications about what was

acceptable and what was not acceptable behaviour, the chances of any pupil being abused or ill-treated would be absolutely minimal.

72. There appeared to be many lines of good communication. We had daily whole school or house assemblies. I met with all staff each day for a briefing and at our monthly staff meetings every pupil in the school was discussed individually. I hoped that senior pupils, staff, the Minister, the Matron and the Doctor were all approachable.
73. I cannot recall the precisely how records were kept but there was invariably follow up work to be done particularly regarding the discussion of individual pupils. The advantage of these detailed discussions was that all staff had a comprehensive, up to date, pastoral and academic profile of each pupil. These discussions would have resulted in specific actions, where necessary, from House staff, Heads of Department and Tutors. On academic matters they would have been co-ordinated by the Deputy Head.
74. Being a small school with a tight knit community little went unnoticed. It was not a vast campus and the mix of day and boarding pupils meant that boarders did not live in an isolated or remote bubble. The parents of day pupils were in and around the school every day. I had an open door policy with frequent visits from staff, pupils and parents. Visitors invariably commented on the open and friendly nature of the school.
75. For those reasons and because staff and pupils were alert to those who were unhappy and not thriving, I was confident that nothing undetected would have been happening.
76. I did not believe that abuse in the school during my period of employment could have occurred and gone undetected. When I subsequently became aware, in September 2015, that the school was subject to a police investigation, which I detail below, I was completely taken aback and deeply shocked. I had no idea. I can only surmise that the victim or victims did not have the confidence to tell others and that nobody suspected anything, or at least did not share that suspicion with anyone else.

77. Perhaps this was through ignorance of what to look out for, of how abusers operate? I had no experience of abusers in previous schools. I had never received specific training in what to look for, although through the Child Protection Policy we knew what to do if something was reported, but it needed to be reported in the first place. I did not receive specific training in what to look for subsequent to Keil, although The Deputy Heads Pastoral in my subsequent school did.

### **Concerns about the school**

78. I was never aware of any concern from an external body or agency or any other person regarding the way pupils were treated in the school.

### **Reporting of complaints / concerns**

79. The School Discipline and Routine booklet that was issued to every pupil and parent had a section on Comments, suggestions, problems and complaints.
80. On a day to day basis it was advised that pupils talk to their House Staff, Tutor, Matron, Deputy Head, the Head, another member of staff, or a senior pupil – 'in fact whoever you think would be most helpful.' It was explained that more serious problems will be dealt with at Head or Deputy Head level.
81. Whilst during the time I was at the school we did deal with serious disciplinary issues, which usually involved alcohol, one case of drugs and a few bullying incidents. There were no child protection issues.
82. When a disciplinary issue was dealt with by the Deputy Head or Head, contact would be made with the parents and a letter would record the incident.

### **Trusted adult / confidante**

83. The local Church of Scotland Minister, the Reverend Ronald Boyd, who was a frequent presence in the school, was the official confidante for all pupils in the school. He had

the advantage of having pastoral responsibility for the pupils, knowing the school well, but at the same time not being employed by the school. It was made known that he was the official confidante in the Routine and Discipline Booklet and in communications within the Houses and to parents.

84. We also latterly asked a retired local female teacher, Doreen Flatman, I think, who knew the school well to take on this role should girls feel more comfortable speaking to a lady.
85. I was not aware of any pupils raising concerns in this way.

### **Abuse**

86. I don't believe that we had a definition of abuse regarding the treatment of children, it would have come under the Child Protection Policy.
87. What constituted abuse in terms of bullying was certainly defined and communicated to pupils, staff and parents. The definition of bullying was: persecuting or intimidating another person physically, verbally or emotionally. It was communicated at House and School Assemblies, in various policies and in the School Discipline and Routine Handbook, and it was made clear that bullying would not be tolerated and would be treated seriously. We tried to minimise the chances of it occurring.
88. Clarity in terms of bullying came with the introduction of a School Discipline and Routine booklet, soon after I arrived. The emphasis for all staff and senior pupils was to be alert to signs of bullying.

### **Child Protection arrangements**

89. The concept of bullying would have been widely discussed by tutors and House staff in particular, formally at assemblies and more informally by Tutors at their meetings. I cannot recall any specific House Staff of Heads of Department meeting when it was



discussed. I would also have made it the subject of some of my assemblies as and when appropriate or if the need arose.

90. Recognition and understanding of child protection and how it related to schools was in its early days. SCIS ran a course for Heads on what was at that time a new concept of having a Child Protection Policy for each school. I think the course must have been in 1994 / 5. It was in the aftermath of the child abuse scandal on Orkney and the Inquiry and the Clyde Report (1993). SCIS created a model policy, appropriate for schools, which we adopted.
91. We followed advice once the mechanics of how schools would tackle child protection were introduced. Staff would then have been instructed at staff meetings, In Service Training days and other meetings by myself and / or the Deputy Head on how to recognise abuse and how to handle any complaint or concern regarding child protection. A Child Protection Officer (CPO) was appointed and it was appreciated by staff that their role was not to try to deal with complaints or concerns, nor to offer confidentiality but to pass the matter to the CPO and for it then to become a multi-agency matter.
92. Child protection policies were evolving at that time in schools and the main difference for staff was to recognise that when a serious concern was raised it was not their role to promise confidentiality or to deal with it. To that extent staff were not given discretion, the Child Protection Policy had to be adhered to and the process followed. For me and, I suspect, for many other Heads, the SCIS Conference was the first time we had come across the term child abuse in the manner in which it was being used and the need for a policy on Child Protection. Subsequent meetings began to expand on what was required in schools,
93. As I have said, Child Protection Policies were new to the school. I felt that with a small school, with a comprehensive tutorial and pastoral system, with good support from Matron, the Minister and the school Doctor, and with a culture that was encouraging a strong sense of community and compassion, the chance of any inappropriate or abusive behaviour going undetected was remote. It was a small knit community and

people did look out for each other. There were incidents of bullying, but they were rare. Pupils were encouraged to speak openly and the style of leadership, particularly amongst senior pupils, did change.

### **External monitoring**

94. There were two formal HMI Inspections of the school in 1992 and 1998. There was a follow up letter in 1994 following the 1992 Inspection stating that there had been good progress on the recommendations previously made.
95. I was not present at the 1992 Inspection but was present for the follow up meeting. In 1998 the Inspectors had unrestricted access to all aspects of school life – the academic and boarding life of the school, pupils, staff, all parents (through a questionnaire) and governors. Staff spoke of the inspectors' discussions with pupils and they mentioned them in their feedback.
96. I spoke with the Inspectors when they returned for the follow up in 1994. In 1998 they spoke at length to me and the Deputy Head and they gave me feedback. They mentioned that 50% of parents had responded to the questionnaire and all agreed that the school had explained clearly its policies and rules for pupils in residence, the boarding staff knew the pupils well and were approachable and helpful, the pupils were given very good support if they had difficulties and that boarding house staff allowed pupils appropriate freedom.
97. In general we were pleased with the report, which recognised the good quality of residential care and the open and friendly relationships between pupils and staff. 'Staff respected pupils' individuality. They also made arrangements to ensure that pupils could undertake communal tasks and make independent choices.'
98. The Inspectors were critical of the quality of residential accommodation and made a number of recommendations.

99. In the 1992 Report the general comments on the boarding accommodation were that it was overall 'satisfactory' and that improvements were ongoing. In the 1998 Report the overall quality of accommodation was rated as 'fair' with parents expressing reservations about the toilet and laundry facilities in particular. One of those recommendations was for the school to review and update its policies especially relating to child protection. It was acknowledged that child protection as a discreet safeguarding issue was evolving rapidly in schools.
100. In 1998, the other recommendations in addition to the school reviewing and updating its child protection policies were: to improve the overall quality of the residential accommodation; to monitor and continue to improve security arrangements; catering arrangements were to take more account of current dietary advice; to review the social education programme; to have clear remits for boarding staff; House were to produce development plans closely linked to the school plan; and staff development was to be reviewed in line with house and school plans.

### **Record keeping**

101. Record keeping largely consisted of hard copies of pupil files and staff files. Pupil files would give details of their previous education and a comprehensive record of their academic and pastoral performance. Serious incidents would be recorded together with significant awards and achievements and all correspondence with parents. Had there been an allegation of abuse, reference would have been made here. Those records were kept by the Headmaster's Secretary and thereafter in school safe and they would be retained for a period of time. I do not know what happened to them when the school closed.
102. Staff files would include details of employment, their contracts, which were held with the Bursar, internal appointments made and all correspondence. Staff files were kept by the Headmaster and the Headmaster's Secretary within a secure area of their offices. When a member of staff left the school they would be retained for a period of time for reference purposes. I do not know what happened to them when the school

closed. House staff would have their own files on each pupil within their care. Tutors would also hold records of their tutees.

103. The record keeping appeared to me to be comprehensive and well organised. There was nothing that I recall giving me any concern in the records of staff or in the manner in which children were being treated. I am also confident that my predecessor would have raised any concerns with me.

### **Leaving Keil School**

104. My time at Keil came to an end in 1999 when I applied for and was appointed Head and MOD Agency Chief Executive of the Duke of York's Royal Military School. I was particularly attracted to the job and to a new and very different challenge
105. Mr Tom Smith, my Deputy Head, was my successor and there was therefore no need for an extensive handover as he had been working alongside me.

### **Closure of Keil School**

106. I do not know the precise date that Keil School closed.
107. Keil's closure had not been envisaged when I left. The loss of the Assisted Place Scheme together with the decline in boarding numbers meant that the profit margins were small. That was nothing new. We had just taken over a pre-school in Helensburgh so there was room for expansion and optimism for the future.
108. I was not privy to the details of why the school closed and had not been involved in any discussions in relation to the school's closure. I do not know when the ultimate decision to close the school was made.

### **Investigations into abuse – personal involvement**

109. I was not involved in any investigation into allegations of abuse or ill-treatment of pupils at the school or into inappropriate behaviour of staff or others towards children in my time at the school. The first time I was aware of any allegation of abuse was when I gave a witness statement to the police in September 2015. I was not made aware of the precise allegation nor of the possible perpetrator.

### **Reports of abuse and civil claims**

110. I was not at any time involved with any reports or civil claims made against the school by former pupils concerning historical abuse.

### **Police investigation / criminal proceedings**

111. I first become aware in September 2015 of a police investigation into abuse at the school.
112. I was phoned by the police to give a witness statement regarding alleged abuse which took place in Mason House, which was the Junior Boys' Boarding House, between 1989 and 1995. I gave a statement to the police explaining that I was not aware of any such abuse having taken place then or at any other time whilst I was at the school.
113. I gave the statement and was asked to respect confidentiality and not to contact anyone else who may have been asked to give a statement.
114. I have not given evidence at a trial.

### **Convicted abusers**

115. The first I knew that a person who worked at the school had been convicted of abuse was when I read in the paper in 2016 that William Bain had admitted to child abuse and been sentenced to prison.


116. William Bain was employed at the school during my time there. He was an intelligent, imaginative and inspiring teacher of physics. He was an Assistant in one of the Boarding Houses and latterly he became a House Master. He involved himself in many aspects of school life. During term time he dedicated himself whole-heartedly to the life of the school. He helped organise many events. He assisted with Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and with outdoor pursuits. He coached games and I appointed him coach of our First XV rugby team. He was popular with pupils and served as the staff representative on the Parents' Committee, known as 'Friends of Keil'.
117. I had no concern about William Bain regarding any inappropriate behaviour and no concern was expressed to me from any source.
118. I did not appoint William Bain. He was recruited by my predecessor, I assume in the usual manner. I do not know what child care qualifications he had and I doubt he had any child care training before or during his period of employment as that would not have been a natural part of teacher training at the time he was training. As a member of staff and of house staff he would have had access to external training and to internal meetings and discussions.
119. He was not subject to supervision or monitoring during my time at the school and there had been no previous allegation of abuse.

### **Helping the Inquiry**

120. The thought that abuse did occur at the school whilst I was there is appalling. What could and should we have done to ensure that it couldn't have happened? Twenty five years ago we were not as conscious as we are today of the potential for child abuse and of the need for child protection policies. That is not an excuse but it is a sign of the times.

121. I can see from my subsequent experience as a Head and more recently as a Governor in two different schools that child protection policies are comprehensive and schools are alert to the range of child protection issues. Staff are better trained in such matters. Agencies are better equipped to deal with boarding schools and appreciate that they are different from residential homes. The fact that child protection under the umbrella of safeguarding is now more readily discussed and understood must help. Child protection policies were an evolutionary process and, as I have explained, soon and swiftly became an integral, understood and accepted part of school life with its associated training and policies. I did not get the impression from my subsequent experience that Keil had been behind the curve.
122. Risk assessments are much more a part of school life than they were twenty five years ago. More comprehensively used, they might have flagged up potential problems earlier. More rigorous checking and monitoring might also have helped.
123. I tried to encourage a culture of openness, of leadership by example, of helping others, of achievement beyond the rugby field. It was important for pupils in the school to thrive and to be challenged academically and in a whole range of activities. We wanted pupils to feel part of a supportive community but at the same time to be outward looking. To achieve that, particularly in a small school, required immense commitment from staff. It relied upon the professionalism of staff and trust between staff and between staff and pupils.
124. We were a small school trying to do a lot. Perhaps too much, although that is not intended as a criticism of the school. I expected a big commitment from staff and indeed from pupils. I wanted pupils to be able to try a variety of activities and hopefully discover one at which they excelled. Fortunately pupils were able to enjoy success in many fields.
125. Standards of boarding accommodation in schools are now higher. There are study bedrooms, there is more personalised space and well equipped communal areas are now expected. Creating an atmosphere of a 'home from home' is much easier to achieve when residential facilities are good.

- 126. Policies are important but creating trust and lines of good communication are paramount. Safeguarding pupils is discussed more formally by staff and pupils and is an integral part of personal social education. Staff induction is more formalised, as is monitoring. These are all improvements.
  
- 127. During my career in education I was aware that boarding school education was unrecognisable from that of a generation before. At the school it was my intention to continue that progress. Hopefully improvements in safeguarding children will further minimise the risk of abuse happening.
  
- 128. Publicity about cases of abuse, even this Inquiry itself, has also made everyone more alert to the possibility of abuse happening.
  
- 129. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.....  .....

Dated..... 05 November 2020 .....