

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

MIK

Support person present: No

Others present : Blair Johnston, Solicitor, Clyde & Co

1. My name is [REDACTED] MIK [REDACTED] but I am known as MIK [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1951. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I currently run my own business making [REDACTED] and I employ five people. I used to make [REDACTED] but now I just make [REDACTED]. I live with my partner in Hexham having moved down there full-time eight or nine years ago.
3. When I left school, I studied Geography at Durham University. I then spent three years after graduating doing various fascinating jobs. I ran a youth hostel in [REDACTED] (with my wife) and before that worked in a painting school on the [REDACTED]. My idea was to start a field course centre because I loved working in the youth hostel so much, so I applied to Moray College in Edinburgh to do a post graduate degree in secondary teaching. This was a one year course. My mother came from Edinburgh and I had worked on the Isle of Mull so there was a connection to Scotland. I had been raised in Essex, Shropshire and London.
4. I was married at that time to my now ex-wife and mother of my four children, [REDACTED]. She didn't have much to do when I was studying at Moray House. We were living at [REDACTED] near Kelty and [REDACTED] was meant to help [REDACTED] who owned the house, but it was in the middle of nowhere so she applied for jobs and went for an interview about a children's home in Kirkcaldy. We thought it was for her being a teaching assistant but it was for running a family group children's home on a council

estate in Kirkcaldy. She (and I) only had five minutes to decide - with no thought of any vetting! It turned out to be good fun and the kids were really great. This was in [REDACTED] 1976. My wife officially ran the home but we both stayed there. I helped her look after the children, there were six of them. We had fun times. I was still to complete my course so I started to look for teaching jobs about that area so that's why when the job at St Ninian's came up I applied. I started teaching there just after I had completed my course. The first two years were my probationary years so I was mainly teaching [REDACTED] then.

5. The children's home where my wife worked and where we lived, was run by Fife Region, and Sean O'Kane was the main person in charge from the council. We got on very well with him. We stayed at the home while I worked at St Ninian's. We didn't have to stay there. It was like having six of our own children. They used to teem around all over the place. We eventually left after two and a half years (starting our own family) and moved to [REDACTED] which was nearer Falkland.

#### **St Ninian's School, Falkland, Fife**

6. St Ninian's was run by the Catholic Order the Christian Brothers. I was interviewed for the role of teacher by Brother LNA and Brother MHJ. I remember we laughed and got on very well during the interview. They chose me largely because of the person I was. I got on with them and I was running a children's home. I presumably had the right sort of credentials, although I wasn't a catholic. I later found out that Brother MHJ was [REDACTED] at St Ninian's and Brother LNA was [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
7. At Moray House I was put out on teaching practice in normal secondary schools. I had been on placements in Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath. I felt like I wished I had had more experience of teaching in a normal school so I would know more of what was expected of pupils' behaviour and how you organised a curriculum because I had to do that mostly myself at St Ninian's. I didn't have the experience but it was a good voyage of discovery.

8. It was my first job after graduating from Moray House, it was rather a shock. I had had teaching practice in other places but it was a steep learning curve with difficult kids from Glasgow. I was twenty-five when I started to work at St Ninian's in 1976 (I worked there until 1983). I felt lucky to be working there as we lived at the children's home where my wife worked and it was reasonably close to Falkland.
9. I started by mostly teaching [REDACTED] and two classes a week of [REDACTED]. You had to do two years of teaching in what your qualification was, hence the [REDACTED]. By the end of my time there, I was mainly teaching [REDACTED]. I played the cello, guitar and piano. It was good and I enjoyed the adaptability of it.
10. My first impressions were that it was good to have the job as I could stay with my wife at the children's home in Kirkcaldy and I could help her. We had the school holidays and the weekends to do things with the kids in the children's home. We took them at least twice to my parents' house in Devon. We also took them up to Rosemarkie in the Black Isle where we had got married.
11. My main impression when I arrived at the school was that the Brothers seemed to be in control most of the time. I was not a total disciplinarian, perhaps I should have been more.

### *Routine*

12. My usual working hours at the school were 9am to about 4pm. On a Tuesday I stayed until 7pm, and on a Thursday I stayed until 9pm. I never slept at St Ninian's. The latest I would stay was 7 or 9 o'clock. I had a wife and the kids in the home to get back to. I think the boys would go off to have showers at 9pm and then I don't know what the night time regime was. I never worked in the dormitory and I was never in that area at night so I don't know about those routines. I think the Brothers had a room off the dorm but I can't be sure of that. I remember Brother Coffey, who was head of the community for a year or two, had a room at the back of the school and he used to fire an air rifle from his window to hit rabbits eating the vegetables in the garden that he looked after

with the children. I think he had registered it and kept it well locked up. His room was on the other side of the building from the dorms, he was on his own. I can't remember if I helped out at the weekends. Sometimes I would help out on a Friday afternoon with the kids who were going to be staying at the school for the weekend.

13. When I worked late after school had ended, I helped out with the boy's homework and activities - it was part of my job description. I would do things there with the boys or sometimes I would take them out.
14. The school day varied and as time went on, we got much more au fait with individual education plans. I remember there were holidays of obligation which were annoying as the kids had nothing to do. They would go up to a church in Leslie. Eventually they went straight back to work!
15. I think there was the capacity for 44 boys to attend, it was almost entirely a Catholic boys only school. The limit was 44 and we were up to the limit when I first started then the figure went down. They had someone in Glasgow who helped with recruitment - either in the social-work offices or on the religious side. By the time Brother Mark and Brother Paul came, we were back up to full capacity. There was a relationship between the Christian Brothers with churches, parents and the social work department in Glasgow. Glasgow and Dundee were the areas in Scotland with mainly Catholic areas. The boys were mostly of below average intelligence. If they were above average, then they would have been sent to a different school.
16. There were about eight or twelve boys in a class. I would have about one lesson off per day to assist with preparation. I am not sure how many lessons I would have in a day. I do remember I did have some double lessons.
17. The boys were grouped in classes according to their age. There were not that many in the class. It was a secondary school so the boys ranged between the ages of eleven or twelve and sixteen. I think there may have been one younger boy during my time there. He was part of the [REDACTED] family and I think he was there to keep the brothers together.

18. I used to do games like rugby and football with the boys. The brothers used to be good at organising games, and used to referee (I particularly remember Brothers LMZ Mark and Paul doing it). There was a double decker bus at one time and they used to take the boys on the bus usually to go to and from Glasgow, but also to play games against other schools. Later on there was a mini-bus that I used to drive. We used to play games after school. The boys were amazing at cross-country and I have good memories of them running up Lomond hill. They used to speed up the hill and to start with I would drive my car up as far as I possibly could and then walk to the top, but eventually I ended up running with them but was given five minutes start. They used to charge down, they were brilliant at cross-country. It was a great place for exercise. There were woods where the boys could go and I remember one boy called [REDACTED] who could be quite difficult, but he used to 'tickle fish,' guddle, and catch them. I think I remember a gym teacher from outside once or twice taking them swimming in Glenrothes.
19. Brother [REDACTED] LMZ [REDACTED] also organised school musicals. I remember we once did Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat. I very much admired his energy and confidence that the children would do what he wanted them to. The musicals usually had a religious theme. He did tell stories about previous productions e.g. when they seemingly used to dip the stage lights by putting wires into a bucket of water! He did also have tales about previous Brothers being somewhat brutal when lining boys up to have haircuts. I think there was quite a lot of strapping involved, but I can't remember it happening when I was there. He also had rather horrific tales about teaching in Liberia. Liberia was part of the 'English Province' of the Christian Brothers, so some of the brothers had taught there and it must have been quite a culture shock. According to LMZ [REDACTED] if they failed any pupil in an exam, the pupil's father was likely to come up to the school threateningly with a machete. The boys there therefore realised that they didn't have to work, so motivating them was difficult. Brother LMZ [REDACTED] found that the answer was using music in everything.
20. I am sure there was some kind of timetable. There was a break time and a lunch time but I can't remember the specifics. I am sure the school day started at 9am and the

kids had their lunch downstairs. I remember sometimes sitting with the boys at lunchtime, but usually [REDACTED] BHB [REDACTED], Maurice Kilbane, the groundsman/caretaker, and I ate our lunch in a separate place in order to get a break from the kids. I remember I used to get smoked mackerel to eat because I had told the kitchen staff that I was vegetarian but didn't mind fish. Quite soon I began to hate smoked mackerel, and still do. My recollection is that lunchtime was usually a well-ordered affair.

21. There wasn't a curriculum for me per se and I wasn't given a syllabus to follow. I had to make one up but it must have been okay'd. We would try to teach them how to read as a lot of them hadn't been to school. It was important for them to learn about the world, and I had to work out what was important for them environmentally. St Ninian's was in beautiful grounds and I would take them outside and teach them practical skills like concreting. In saying that, we didn't lose sight about the importance of writing things down. They liked to build things and in some ways they were like primary school children, they liked to make things. I remember doing maps to give them a perception of the world, and I would quite often take them out on field trips, such as the East Wemyss Centre or on the Lomond Hills. Eventually, partly because there were new Brothers who could teach social subjects etc., and because I far preferred it and was good at it, I ended up teaching [REDACTED] I just loved the voyages of exploration. The children could get very enthusiastic, but you had to keep thinking of new things for them to do, and I enlisted lots of help and advice from adults including [REDACTED] BHB [REDACTED] and my mother (a pottery and music teacher). For instance, drawing with pencil, charcoal and chalk, pens and crayons, painting in several media, leatherwork, lino-cutting and other print-making, weaving, plasterwork, vegetable dyeing, a lot of pottery, building construction and concreting, path rebuilding and even, for one memorable lesson, decorating bamboo chopsticks with compass points heated up in a Bunsen burner: they were only allowed to take them home if they had successfully transferred thirty peas from one bowl to another just using the chopsticks.
22. We didn't keep an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the kids at the start of my time there but they were introduced when I was there. I think this happened when I was there, but I may be getting confused with another school. We definitely had to write

reports on them at least once a year for their reviews. Educationally, the most important and structured record-keeping was their writing and reading scores (SRA) which Margaret Nichol kept. Towards the end of my time at St Ninian's, record keeping became more structured. St Ninian's closed because of the lack of Brothers to run the place.

23. I taught [REDACTED] My classroom was downstairs in the basement. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] That was trashed by the boys on one occasion. When I was at Moray House, I had been put out into placements at a few schools. I remember feeling at the time that I wished I had had more experience of teaching in a normal school as the boys at St Ninian's could be quite difficult. They would have tantrums. I found that Margaret, one of the other teachers, was a great help.
24. I think I was chosen for the job because of the type of person I was, I had experience of working with young people and I helped out at the children's home my wife ran. I was a probationary teacher to start with but I didn't get much supervision from Moray House or anywhere. I was given a fairly free hand dealing with the kids.
25. I was not given any formal training that I can remember in relation to the emotional needs of the kids. I do know the Brothers did go on courses down to Hawkstone in Shropshire. These may have been on how to cope with things, although in at least one case it was because the brother was losing his faith. I think most of the Brothers had educational qualifications, but usually for England. To teach in Scotland (or to be paid for teaching from the local authorities) some of them took a six month conversion course in Scottish Education, perhaps at Moray House.
26. I worked during term time at the school. During the holidays, I would very occasionally come and help with the kids who didn't go home. I remember the school had rabbits and birds and I helped to look after them during the holidays. I don't think it was part of my contract to go in and help out. There were very few kids about during the holidays if at all.

27. Schooling started in the August. It was usually the same set of kids throughout the year. Occasionally we got boys that it didn't work out for. Most of the kids came from Glasgow and we would take them back at weekends and at holiday times in the double decker bus. I loved the double decker bus. There were definitely kids who stayed at the weekends as those were the kids I would do something on the Friday afternoon with. I think that the school might have moved later on to have 52 week a year placements, but, particularly as it didn't officially concern me I could be confusing this. I do remember coming in during one holiday and there was a boy with great problems, possibly glue-sniffing, who went around smashing the huge windows.

*Religious instruction*

28. The kids attended mass at least once a week. There was a chapel inside St Ninian's and I used to help with the music and we would get the kids to sing hymns. When my mother died, they held a special mass for her. The Brothers were very caring people, and they seemed to be very sincere and sure in their beliefs. The Vatican too, as well as wanting the mass to be in the vernacular, also wanted more modern music, so the children became very involved with the music and played penny whistles or mouthorgans or guitars as well as sung, and I remember Brother LMZ was very enthusiastic about this.

*Recreation*

29. I have a very vague memory of taking three or four kids camping for a weekend at the end of my time at St Ninian's. My children might even have come too but I can't remember. We once took them on an official trip to stay in Tomintoul Youth Hostel, I think Brothers Paul and Mark were there. I can't really remember who went or how we got there. We did try to organise trips out for them, especially with the minibus, but usually just for the afternoon. They might even have been there for some of the weekends, I can't remember.

*Inspections/visits*



30. I don't think I can remember any inspections taking place. I would have thought that there must have been some but I don't know if there were. If there were inspections, I can't remember having to prepare for one. I don't know if any Brothers came to officially inspect the school.
31. Occasionally, outside social workers would come to visit the kids they were in charge of and talk to them to see whether they were happy and if they were coping. Some would come fairly often. I don't know how frequently they would come. They would usually come from Glasgow social work department.
32. I didn't have any involvement with the parents. We didn't have a parent's night as such. They must've come to visit at some point but it wasn't the general rule. I wouldn't have had an official role with the parents, but I occasionally met them.

*Discipline*

33. I remember having a discussion with one of the Brothers about controlling the children. I can't remember who that discussion was with. It was to do with how to hold them off if they were fighting with each other. We probably talked about it in staff meetings too. And I remember having a conversation in the social-worker's office where one of the boys said that Brother LNA used to do something with his knuckles and their ears and that they found this painful, but I wasn't sure what this involved or how often he did it. This incident with Brother LNA happened during the first couple of years so was during my probationary period.
34. Brian (I think his name was Brian) was the [REDACTED] for my first two or three years, and lived quite close to me in Kirkcaldy. We used to drive back and forth to the school together. He was employed by the Brothers and seemed to work efficiently enough but he had a drink problem and was dismissed half-way through my time there. He was dismissed after he had stopped off at the pub in Gateside when he was returning with a pupil back to the school and had left the pupil waiting in his car or the minibus for over an hour.

35. MBV [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Occasionally individual social workers would arrive to check up on the boys they were in charge of, but not very often - Falkland was a long way from Glasgow. Perhaps they were even called in sometimes in cases where the pupils were causing concern.
36. The Brothers were good at helping me with the pupils. We had staff meetings about the behaviour of the children, if they had been intolerable in lessons. I can't remember sending a pupil to fetch a Christian Brother to help me with dealing with a difficult boy, but it must have happened.
37. If a boy was being difficult, then it was practice to send them out of the class to cool off. This was to give them the opportunity to calm down. If that didn't work, then I would send them upstairs to stand in the front hall. This was the main punishment. I am not sure how long they were made to stand up in the front hall. I think it would be for the duration of the lesson and sometimes during break times.
38. I was told once or twice verbally about restraining the boys. I think I received this information from one or two of the Brothers or at a staff meeting. We definitely did discuss this. It was not like it is now. It would have to be in black and white now. You could strap kids at that time but I never did it and I was never asked to do it. I didn't have a strap anyway. I didn't see anyone else strapping the kids. Brother LMZ had once told me a story of having the boys all line up and they were all strapped. It was for a silly reason, I can't remember what for now. This was before I was there and I don't know who did it.
39. I didn't use the belt at St Ninian's. I don't think the Christian Brothers used it. I can't remember if the other teachers used it, I would've remembered that happening. The belt was eventually phased out in general throughout the country. I didn't see how the Christian Brothers or the others were disciplining the children other than the obvious tellings off and sanctions.

40. Earlier on in my career, during my Moray House year, I went on teaching practice to a school where there was the practice of belting the kids. I found this practice strange as I wasn't used to it.
41. My way of dealing with a difficult kid was to get him to stand outside the class and if that didn't work, he would be moved upstairs to the front hall. The front hall was a big tall room and sometimes there would be people walking past. The boys were just made to stand there. They would be worried if a Christian Brother would see them and they would be worried what the Brother would think of them. I think they could have been taken off by a Brother to be spoken to or by the social worker. I don't know how long they stood there for. I think they had to stand there for a fair amount of the day. Mostly it was until the end of the lesson. I did this if the kids were being unsafe or if they were getting untoward.
42. I can't remember if there were any other forms of discipline. I suppose the Brothers could have contacted the kids' parents or the social work department. Eventually this did happen at the end of my time there. The kids could go to **MBV** and have discussions with him if they had any problems.
43. I can't remember ever having to rush off to get a Brother to help me sort out a class. I may have but it was forty years ago so I can't be sure. Occasionally, I would have the whole class outside to wait in the corridor. They were not allowed to swear. The boys would remain outside until they were asked to come back in.
44. I don't think there was any occasion when the police were called in to deal with the kids. I know that happened in another school I was in later in my career but that never happened at St Ninian's when I was there, as far as I can remember.
45. I wasn't given much official training when I was there about how to deal with the boys. This is a criticism of my time there. I would get advice from Margaret Nichol or **BHB** **BHB** the other teachers. I wasn't sent on any training courses. Near the end of my time there I remember being on a visit to another school, **\_\_\_\_\_** **\_\_\_\_\_** It was a non-denominational school. During an assembly the

headmaster acted like a bastard. He had singled out one boy and was belittling him repeatedly in front of everyone for doing something wrong. I was completely shocked that a headmaster would behave that way. I had never seen that kind of behaviour at St. Ninian's - the brothers wouldn't have done that to a child.

46. The teachers at St Ninian's seemed to have great control over the kids. They would tell them off. Other things might have happened when I wasn't there. They didn't physically abuse them, they might have restrained them at some point but I can't seem to remember that. I can't remember any Brother or anyone else physically attacking any of the pupils when I was there, apart from the ear episode. I can't remember any pupil coming to me saying that they had been physically or sexually abused, and I'm positive that I would have remembered that.
47. For me, the only punishments or discipline I was aware of was putting them to stand out in the front hall. Also, if they had misbehaved and we had arranged to go out then they wouldn't be allowed to go. There must obviously have been other sanctions and being lectured to by the brothers/ headmaster.
48. Generally, the kids would be under control. I remember one kid cutting himself whilst lino-cutting and we rushed to the science lab and looked at his blood under the microscope. It was a relaxed attitude. I tended to work by being enthusiastic. We did however talk about discipline in staff meetings. (I am not sure whether the headmaster used the belt at St. Ninian's to start with - but I can remember discussions about it being phased out in all of Scotland after court cases dealing with complaints from parents.) I don't know if these discussions were minuted. I think there must have been some sort of paperwork or discipline code, we didn't talk about it in a great deal of detail. I think there must have been a staff handbook or something like that. We did have staff meetings where we would talk about policy. I don't know how often these meetings were. We definitely had a staff meeting at the start of term. There were other meetings throughout the term.
49. I don't know if discipline was recorded, it probably was but I am not sure. I don't have a memory of officially writing it down, I'm sure I would have had to. I probably had to

report it as it was a close community. I don't know if there was a discipline book but I do know that when we wrote reports on a pupil, it was written down somewhere. You would mention to someone if a kid had to be put outside. I don't know what kind of records would be available now. We did have to fill in reports about the kids and work out lessons. We did do some paperwork but I can't remember exactly what.

50. I did find it challenging dealing with the kids. I don't think I ever raised this specifically with the Christian Brothers. I never thought about giving up the job due to the difficult kids. The Brothers were very helpful to me.
51. The Christian Brothers seemed to have more humanity towards the kids and seemed to care about how the pupils progressed. Brothers Mark and Paul cared how the pupils progressed. I can't remember once seeing any Christian Brother doing anything violent towards the kids or abusive there. I didn't see anything that caused me concern. I would definitely have remembered seeing anyone hitting a kid. Other things might have happened at other times, I don't know. I remember the kids would try to get other kids into trouble. There would be fighting amongst the kids and we would pull them off of each other because we were bigger than them. This didn't happen very often. I'm sure that would have been recorded somewhere, whether it was verbally or physically, but I don't know where. The kids thought the Christian Brothers were on their side. I've said often in the past that the Christian Brothers were brilliant and did a wonderful job. That was my experience. It was my first job out of teacher training and it was a happy time. I look back at this time as being a positive time. It was therefore a complete shock to me when the allegations surfaced about physical and sexual abuse, and that does make my view towards the brothers very different.

### *Pupils*

52. I don't think we were given much background on the kids in the school. I remember there was one kid whose father had murdered his mother. When he found out about this he went wild and broke the windows. I am not sure he will still be of this world as the police said a large number of the kids committed suicide after they had been in St Ninian's and I would say he would have been one of them.

53. We were given some intimation about their background and attainments before they arrived, but I can't remember being told that much about the kids. I believe that the kids were there mainly for not attending school or being thrown out of school. I remember that the school refusers were the quieter ones. We definitely did not get detailed information about their background. I know that if their reports made it seem like they needed specialist care they weren't brought to the school. A few found it very difficult to read and write.
54. Some of the kids would run away, it wasn't a secure place, they were not locked in so they could easily run away. The kids would get picked up and brought back. Most of them came from Glasgow which was a long way away. I remember one kid being picked up by the local policeman who was off-duty. He thought he was getting a lift to Glasgow but the policeman brought him back to the school.
55. Some of the kids could be difficult. They would have tantrums like two year olds. The kids had to have limits. In the children's home we had worked out that Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) worked. This meant that the children could do things wrong and would get reprimanded for it, but they would know that you would always welcome them back. Some of the kids at St. Ninian's couldn't cope. They arrived with problems from home. I had gone to a public school and came from a middle class family so I wasn't necessarily good at the psychology of what actually caused their behaviour. I used to take them outside and get them to cool down. If they attacked somebody you obviously just had to physically pull the aggressor off and take him outside to cool down. Come to think of it, there must have been times when I asked a pupil to go and get a brother/headmaster.

*Lay teachers*

56. Margaret Nichol was a fantastic teacher and she was wonderfully patient with the kids. She was fantastic at trying to get them up to scratch reading-wise. She taught literacy and numeracy and she would help the boys with their reading. The kids loved Margaret. She used to get upset after the long summer holiday because some of them

had forgotten how to read. She was wonderfully patient. The general atmosphere in her classroom, the impression I got, was of a happy environment for the betterment of the kids who came from difficult circumstances. The kids didn't sit exams so they didn't work towards passing exams. Margaret would get them to work towards maths or reading scores. It was the old O Grades system at the time which was not good for these boys. She was there the whole time I was there.

57. BHB was the [REDACTED] teacher. He was a brilliant big guy and everyone loved him. It was so sad when he died and then his wife died five days afterwards. She must have missed him. He taught [REDACTED]. He was a cool guy. We got on well and he was supportive of me when I joined the school.
58. I remember when I first arrived at the school there was a social worker at the school. He would prepare reports on the pupils and take them to their case conferences, usually in Glasgow. He had a problem with alcohol and he was sacked for leaving a boy outside the pub before returning him to the school, and I think that this was after other drink-related incidents.
59. There was also a female 'matron' who was sacked after they found she was addicted to sniffing aerosol cans. They found a ridiculous number of hairspray cans in her room. I don't know who she was as I think she was only there for two or three months. There were two or three other women employed, mainly as kitchen staff or cleaners or for looking after the boys' and brothers' things, but I don't think they had a direct house-mother role. The Brothers valued them.
60. There was a sports teacher, I can't remember his name, who started a job at St. Ninian's having been teaching in a normal school. On his first day one of the boys had a fit, a tantrum, on the playing field. The teacher didn't know how to deal with the boy so he simply drove off after the game and never came back. The boys would usually be calmly dealt with by the Christian Brothers who seemed to be in overall control.

61. I think there may have been a psychologist attached to the school; if there wasn't then there really should have been. I have a feeling there was one there sometimes but that's as far as I can say. For some reason, I think it was a woman. I don't think she was employed by the Christian Brothers but I might be getting this memory confused with another place.

*Christian Brothers*

62. Usually there were about five Brothers from the order of the Christian Brothers at the school. They took it in turns to teach. When I first arrived, Brother **MHJ** was the **██████████** and Brother **LNA** was **██████████**. Later on Brother Coffey was the **██████████**. He had been the headmaster at three different direct grant public schools and then he came to this wee school with 44 kids. He used to teach science and things like that. Then Mark and Paul took over. The Brothers all came in and taught different things. I can't remember what other subjects they taught. The Brothers were all involved in some respect with teaching and that included sport. The place was in a lovely setting and it was nice in the summer to be able to go off and do things. I remember the Brothers liked to play golf and a couple used to paint their golf balls red so they could get out when it was snowing.
63. Some Brothers would want to leave and I think a couple were sent down to Hawkstone Hall in Shopshire for counselling. I think they were sent there to try and persuade them to stay in the Order. They may have lost their faith or something like that. The kids could be difficult so I can understand that. I don't remember who those Brothers were. Some would be transferred - they had taken vows of obedience and had to do what they were told.
64. The children could be difficult and they came from difficult home circumstances. This behaviour sometimes manifested itself in tantrums. And I remember a lesson when I drew outlines of the children's heads projected onto a large piece of paper and got them to fill them in. One boy coloured in his picture in red blotches, like blood. They didn't talk about things with me and I don't know if there was anyone they could talk



things through with. Maybe it was something the Christian Brothers did at night with the boys. I just used to take them out and give them as good a time as possible.

65. I have been asked about Brothers who were at St Ninian's at the same time as me. I recognise the names of Brother **MCY** Brother **LHC** Brother **MBS** and Brother **LNC** but I can't remember what they looked like.

*Brother Mark Farrell and Brother Paul Kelly*

66. I knew Brother Mark Farrell as Brother Mark and Brother Paul Kelly as Brother Paul. They worked well with each other and they used to take the kids out on activities, often in the bus or mini bus, together with taking them back to Glasgow They were both good at sport, they had lots of energy and did lots for the kids.
67. Brother Mark didn't seem to need to chastise the boys. He would have a certain look and he would just need to look at the boys and they would do as they were told.
68. Brother Paul and Brother Mark left the school at the same time when it was closing down and Paul went to a bigger Christian Brothers school in Plymouth and he eventually left the Order and got married. Brother Mark worked in the prison service and I went to his ordination service near Lanark.
69. As I've previously said, I didn't see any of the Brothers abusing any of the kids, physically or sexually. I did eventually read the allegations of sexual abuse and I gather they were found guilty but I'm not sure on which charges. I was told this verbally by my ex-wife and tried to find out about it via Google and the News sites, but couldn't discover anything. Probably living in England didn't help.

*Brother **MHG***

70. Brother **MHG** arrived at St. Ninian's when I was there for the last year. I remember the whole school went on a seventeen mile walk with the kids and we ran a lot of it. I

know he was [REDACTED]

He was quiet but appeared caring.

Brother LNA [REDACTED]

71. [REDACTED] Brother MHJ was [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I heard something about Brother LNA flicking the ear of one of the kids. I never asked the specifics.

MBV [REDACTED]

72. MBV [REDACTED] had been a Brother, I presume at St Ninian's as well, but had left to get married. He was a really good guy. He really cared for the kids. He had been a Brother at the school and then left to get married. He then came back some years later as the [REDACTED] His wife, [REDACTED] after we left (after a gap of a year or two). [REDACTED] There were two or three physical allegations against him at the trial. My opinion was that his heart was totally in the right place, and he should never have been involved in the trial. I don't know what happened at the trial, but I gather he was found not guilty. I phoned up to find out about convictions from the Talk-To-Us team and was told that this was an on-going enquiry so I wasn't told. In a way it's good that I don't know.

Brother LMZ [REDACTED]

73. I have spoken about him earlier, he used to organise sports and the musicals. He was a short fat guy with strong glasses (called LMZ by the kids) with lots of energy. He always used to say that he would end up one day having a heart attack and he did. He wasn't at the school when it closed.
74. He did say to me about two or three times about things that had gone on before I arrived with regards to treatment of the kids. They had used the strap. I didn't use the strap, I was allowed to but I was against that sort of thing.

75. All the Brothers worked with the children, Brother **MHJ** was perhaps the only one who didn't have much contact with the kids during the day. He was in charge of the community but I don't know exactly what he did.

*School records*

76. I remember **MBV** writing records and reports on anything that happened with the kids in school. He had on-going reports which related to the kids and what was happening to them. We had to give reports on all the pupils that would then go back to the **MBV**. The school was cheaper than other places because it was the Christian Brothers (they used to have long hours and a low staff-pupil ratio). That could be part of the reason we got so many pupils, but also it had an overtly caring inclusivity.
77. **MBV** would get our reports, a headmaster report and a general report about the kids and collate them. The general report was not just an academic report, it would be about how the kids were doing. We would do these at least once a year. I am not sure how often this happened but the practice got better towards the end of my time there. **MBV** would liaise with the **MBV** in Glasgow and he would go to meetings there. He was good with the kids.

*Arrangements for pupils leaving St Ninian's, Falkland*

78. The procedure changed around the kids leaving when I was there. At first, the kids appeared to be just allowed to leave, they just left at the age of sixteen. That procedure changed and for a couple of years after the kids left the Brothers and social work departments would help to try to get arrangements in place. I don't know what these arrangements were. The kids tended to leave when they were sixteen. Towards the end of my time there, the procedure became more ostensible, more official but I don't really know what was done. I was not involved in these arrangements so I don't know really know what they were. It is my thinking that more was being done. It was difficult especially if they couldn't read.

### **Life after St Ninian's, Falkland**

79. St Ninian's closed down in 1983. I left and got a job teaching in different special schools in Perth & Kinross and Glenrothes. I then did supply teaching for twelve years and then I made the move down to Hexham to be with my partner. When I was still teaching near Kinross, a party of two or three kids from St Ninian's came to visit me once at the school for half an hour.

### **Police Investigation**

80. Two or three years ago, I was questioned by the police about my time in St Ninian's at Kirkcaldy Police Station. It came completely out of the blue. It seemed to me that the police investigator had an agenda when he was questioning me. OK, an understandable agenda as he had heard all the children's allegations and was obviously on their side, but an agenda against me nonetheless. It must have been frustrating for him because the duty solicitor kept telling me to say 'no comment'. By that time I was thoroughly traumatised anyway. It had been my idea to travel up to Kirkcaldy police station rather than the police coming down to interview me. When I had found out on the phone a few days before that I was going to be charged for an offence, I was adamant that I had to have a solicitor present. Despite this there wasn't a solicitor present. Instead of me waiting in the cafe or anywhere else the two or three hours for the solicitor to turn up, I had my belt and shoes taken and was locked up. I am claustrophobic and I was very very upset about being put into a police cell. I kept telling them that I didn't know what I was supposed to have done thirty five years ago. It was like a scene from Kafka. And when I did hear the accusation against me I couldn't believe it.
81. The solicitor who took over my case from the duty solicitor said he had never seen anything like the accusations against the Christian Brothers. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The allegation was rubbish, but if it had been true I do understand that it deserved to be taken seriously. During

the interview the policeman had told me there was corroborating evidence from another pupil, but the new solicitor soon found out from evidence transcripts that this wasn't true.

82.

[REDACTED]

83.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I felt so relieved as it had been a very upsetting time for me. I sat and cried in my workshop during the phone call and afterwards.

84. The policeman told me that a large number of kids had committed suicide after life at St Ninian's and it appeared to me that he thought it was all the fault of the Christian Brothers. He said it was a large number of them but I can't remember how many he said. I'm sure that some of them would have had difficulties after they left adjusting to life outside of St Ninian's, but I don't think the Christian Brothers could be blamed entirely for this. Obviously, presuming even a few of the allegations were true, there is a great great deal of irrefutable blame to be put at their door, and it must have been very traumatic for the children involved, especially from people they trusted; but I have been trying to relate this statement to what I felt at the time as I had generally only seen the good things about the Brothers and the school. I don't have any information about the kids who did commit suicide. A lot of them were fragile and they had had difficult upbringings and that was before they might well have discovered drugs and alcohol.

85.

[REDACTED] I expected to be actually called as a witness but I wasn't. I had been contacted by Mark, Paul and [REDACTED] solicitors about being called as a witness, but by then I didn't want anything to do with the whole affair. I would have gone if pressed. Paul's solicitor was supposed to send me a questionnaire but she didn't. My partner thought I shouldn't

have anything to do with the trial as she had seen how traumatised I had been. I Googled the trial but couldn't find out what was happening or had happened.

86. For some strange reason (I can't remember why, but it must have been after a particularly frenetic day), the only time I had ever thought about child abuse whilst at St Ninian's was once when I was standing by the wall outside the front door. It occurred to me that anyone with any problems related to sexually abusing boys should come to work at St Ninian's and that would cure them, due to how difficult the kids could be. You just don't think about that kind of thing, it was only that one time in the seven years that I was there. I just didn't think about abuse, it just didn't cross my mind. I don't know why I had that thought, it wasn't because of anything that had happened. I would not like this thought to be taken the wrong way, but to emphasise the fact that I didn't see any physical abuse, or can't remember any. No kid ever confided in me anything untoward that was happening. I am not saying that things didn't happen but that I just didn't see or hear about anything.

87. My time at St Ninian's was a long time ago and it was a different set of circumstances. It was my first proper job after leaving Moray House. I taught in a school near Kinross after that and at one time I was a teacher at Rimpleton House in Glenrothes and it was much more controlled, with far more support staff. I didn't really get on with them there. You couldn't take the kids out to places. St Ninian's was run on a more ad-hoc basis, and I would like people to know that there were a lot of very good things about the place and the brothers, as well as the horrible things that I found out retrospectively. In North-East England I did do a couple of days of supply teaching in two day units for children excluded from school. They were both appalling, with very limited control and work done and seemed to be reinforcing bad behaviour, with none of the Brothers' commitment and inclusivity. This is something the Catholic Church generally seems to do well.

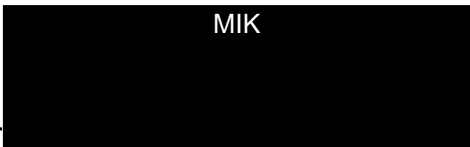
### **Lessons to be learned**

88. It is important that people should be vetted when they apply to work with children. It is important that children are raised in a mixed environment. There should be someone

checking up on things and to be very alert as to what could be happening. It should be a positive environment, and there were many good things about the commitment of the Brothers. The people dealing with the kids should not harbour grudges against them, welcome them back when they have done something wrong but work on the problem. They must be the right people to work there. They should also have a sense of adventure and fun.

**Other information**

89. 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.

MIK  


Signed.....

Dated..... 15/05/2019 .....