

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Ronald BOYD

Support person present: No.

1. My name is Ronald Mitchell Haldane Boyd. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1967. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I have a Bachelor of Divinity from St Andrews University, which I gained between 1985 and 1990 and I have a Postgraduate Diploma in Pastoral Theology, also from St Andrews University and which I gained between 1990 and 1991. In addition I have an International Postgraduate Certificate in Education (IPGCE), which I achieved at the University of Buckingham between 2016 and 2017.
3. After qualifying in 1991, I was Probationer Assistant Minister at New Kilpatrick Parish Church, Bearsden and I remained there until 1993. Thereafter I was Parish Minister of Dumbarton West Kirk between May 1993 and September 1998 and Parish Minister of Troon Portland Parish Church between September 1998 and August 2010.
4. In August 2010 I became Chaplain and Teacher at Queen Victoria School, Dunblane (QVS) and I remained in that position until September 2017 when I became Housemaster and teacher at the school. I no longer have a Chaplaincy role.
5. I am now a qualified teacher of Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies and I am registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). I teach Core Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Certificate National 5 and Higher classes. I remain in that position at QVS at present.

6. As a housemaster, I am responsible for the care and wellbeing of sixty-three boys from S1 to S6 and I am responsible for the 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) chronologies of the boys in my care. I also fulfil a pastoral role to support the boys in their emotional and academic development, which includes building their resilience.
7. Housemasters must ensure that their staff adhere to the guidelines of Child Protection and professional conduct at all times while on duty, referring breaches of practice to the Head of Boarding. They must liaise between the academic staff, the pupils and the parents. In QVS housemasters are the named people who have a responsibility for the care of pupils in their boarding houses.

Employment with Keil School, Dumbarton

8. As Parish Minister of Dumbarton West Kirk between May 1993 and September 1998, I was also Chaplain to Keil School, Dumbarton.
9. My duties as Chaplain to the school involved conducting school assemblies once a week and attendance at formal events in the school, as required. I also occasionally assisted in delivering the curriculum of RME with the RME teacher, Sue Kidd.
10. I also had involvement with pupils of the school when they attended morning worship in the West Kirk and I attended lunch at the school on a weekly basis to meet with pupils in that setting. My attendance allowed the pupils an opportunity to get to know me and allowed me to understand life in the boarding context of the school.
11. My attendance at those lunches was meant to allow them the opportunity to have access to me on their own time and on their own terms, should they wish to speak about anything. They never disclosed anything to me, but our conversations allowed them an input into the development of worship which they were obliged to attend during term time in the school

12. In 1996, I believe, at the request of the Head, John Cummings, I attended at youth event PowerPoint presentations on three occasions with pupils and also with Sue Kidd, the RME Teacher, and Martin Coombs, a Geography Teacher. In 1997 and 1998 I also assisted with invigilation at examinations at the school.
13. The youth event presentations were rather heavily biblical, extended services about youth culture and morality. It was an independent-styled service run by Power Point, which I fed back on to the Head Teacher. Following a service with an alter call, I suggested that these services were no longer attended by the pupils as I believed there was an emotional pressure which could have an undue influence on the young people exposed to them.
14. There was no formal recruitment for the chaplaincy of the school, this allowed post was associated with the Parish Ministry which I held at the West Kirk in Dumbarton. I was not required to be GTCS registered for Chaplaincy, but that did not worry me. As a Minister you were put through enhanced disclosure by the Church of Scotland and were not expected to teach within the normal setting. I only covered one lesson in the school for Sue Kidd, the teacher of RME.
15. Similarly, it did not really worry me that GTCS registration was not essential for teaching posts in a Private school at the time. Enhanced disclosure was in place and supervision of probationer teachers was enacted in the school. That was the legislation at the time. For professional development, I was glad to be put through teacher training, which I believed developed my teaching toolkit and expertise in educational philosophy and practice.
16. My Line manager at Keil was the Head Teacher, John Cummings, and we met weekly and as required to discuss what was expected and required of me. As Chaplain I conducted worship in the West Kirk of Dumbarton, which the pupils attended, and I also conducted morning assemblies once a week and regular evening services within the school once a month.
17. Additionally, I would attend morning break to meet with the staff and be available for them on a weekly basis. This changed over time in that it moved to encompass

meeting with pupils for lunch, although latterly this was dropped as it was not a meaningful experience for the pupils.

18. There was no training provided or arranged by the school for my role as Chaplain. My assistance in RME was always under the supervision of the class teacher, except on one occasion, where I was asked to cover a class on the History of the Church of Scotland. I cannot remember the date of this cover class.

Policy

19. My only involvement in relation to the care of children at Keil school was with ongoing pastoral care, if requested, which involved confirmation classes and which were always held with other adults as per the safeguarding arrangements at the time. Staff and their families were able to request pastoral care, if they wished and students were also able to make such a request, however they never did so on an individual basis. There were the attempted 'getting to know you' sessions at and immediately after lunch, however these ended quite quickly and I cannot recall how long they were in place.
20. I cannot recall the exact safeguarding arrangements from 1993 to 1998, although I was talked through the protocols by the Head Teacher and staff reminded me of them. There was a safeguarding office, which I think was the Depute Head, and there were protocols on transport, with pupils sitting in the back of vehicles and no member of staff allowed to be in a vehicle on their own with pupils. Disclosure was not to be kept confidential between the person disclosing and the member of staff receiving the comments and this was advised to the pupils.
21. As for transport from the PowerPoint events, pupils were dropped off at home by minibus and on one occasion I travelled back with the teacher throughout the drop offs so that he would not be alone in the minibus with them.
22. I am unaware of the training and recruitment of staff as I was not involved throughout my time at Keil School. Safeguarding was changing at that time, which I was aware

of as a Parish Minister, although I really cannot recall the changes from so long ago. I know that the Church was putting positions in place and I was not aware of Keil lagging behind in the requirements of the time, but I truly cannot recall the detail of what either institution was required to do in the 1990's.

Strategic planning

23. I had no involvement in the strategic planning of the school and therefore cannot comment on training and planning within Keil School or whether the potential for abuse featured.

Other staff

24. As school Chaplain I had no line management responsibilities within the school and did not manage any staff there.

Recruitment of staff

25. I was not involved in the recruitment of staff at the school and therefore I am not aware of the extent to which references were obtained from former employers. Similarly I am not able to say whether referees were actually spoken to.
26. I was aware of the normal routine of advertising of posts and the desire that staff be General Teaching Council for Scotland registered, but at that time in Private schooling this was not essential. I was also aware that interviews were conducted and observed lessons were carried out.

Training of staff

27. I was not involved in training or the personal development of staff. I am aware that there was regular in-service at the start of terms, but I was not involved in staff training or in the development policies at Keil School.

Supervision/staff appraisal/staff evaluation

28. I was not involved in supervision of staff, staff appraisal, or evaluation of staff. I was aware that normal Principal Teacher supervision of staff was in place, with the Depute Head overseeing academic roles, but I am unsure of the supervision that was in place for boarding staff.

Living arrangements

29. I lived off site in the Manse attached to my parish setting.
30. At the school there were residential Housemasters in each of the boarding houses, with Deputies also resident within the boarding houses. There was also a Nursing Matron, who lived in the main building, away from the Girl's house on the top floor. In addition, there were three staff houses in the grounds, which housed two teachers and the Head teacher. They stood apart from the boarding accommodation.
31. To my knowledge the doors of the children's residential areas were not locked and, although I'm not aware whether there were regular inspections of the security of the buildings, staff were vigilant. They appeared to be aware, as far as I could tell, of specific pupil needs on a pastoral level, which I assumed was applicable in all levels. Three of the boarding houses were in separate buildings, two on the main school site, one in the main school teaching accommodation and one on an adjacent piece of land. The main house on the top floor would have been easily accessed by anyone in the main building.
32. By 1997 the school had keypad entrance locks on all properties which limited the possibility for ingress to the boarding houses. I seem to recall that those entrance locks were fitted in response to the Dunblane School shooting and the change to all schools having to be locked.

Culture within Keil

33. Keil was small and was a sporting school and not overly academic. This was partly due to the ethos of the McKinnon Trust, which supported pupils from the island communities.
34. There was no gender imbalance in the positions that I saw filled during my time in the school, as regards staff/pupil roles. It seemed to be a happy place and the mix of day and boarding pupils blended well. The staff was quite static and appeared to be supportive of the pupils and of one another. They were not overly happy with the leadership of Mr Cummings, but seemed much happier with the promotion of Tom Smith in the last days of the school.
35. Mr Cummings was a shy and private man whom the staff did not feel promoted the school well enough, or engaged with them socially. Tom Smith was more outgoing and driven for the success of Keil. He was well liked, faithful and outgoing. He was well known by the staff who shared his hopes for the future of Keil as a well-promoted school.
36. My understanding of fagging is that it is a process where younger pupils were used as servants for the older pupils. It is normally an historic term associated with Private Schools, however it did not exist at Keil.

Discipline and punishment

37. There was a form of punishment called 'Natural History', which was issued by the staff and which involved pupils spending time under the supervision of the prefects, tidying up the grounds. I am unaware which member of staff the prefects worked with or were responsible to and I am unsure what behaviour was punished by Natural History.
38. I did not see any formal policy in relation to discipline and punishment, as I was not on the teaching staff and not involved in the sanction of pupils. There were school rules, which I cannot remember in detail, but do remember seeing, however I cannot comment further.

Day to day running of the school

39. I was not at any time involved in the day to day running of the school and I do not know what that meant in practice.
40. Although I was not responsible for the running of the school, as a regular visitor I was unaware of any abuse in the school.
41. I believed that the staff were open enough and I believed that there was an opportunity for pupils to come forward with suspicions or allegations, knowing that they would be taken seriously. I had no suspicion of abuse in Keil School during my time there and no pupils to my knowledge came forward with allegations of abuse. As I was unaware of allegations, I do not know who they would have spoken to, if at all and no pupil approached me.

Concerns about the school

42. The school was not, to my knowledge, ever the subject of concern, in school or to any external body or agency, or any other person, because of the way in which children and young people in the school were treated.
43. I had no suspicion of there being any concerns, or of any individuals who were the subject of concern. As I had no such suspicion I cannot comment on the extent to which parents of children would have been made aware had there been any such concerns, nor who had responsibility for reporting to the parents.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

44. I am unaware of any complaints process, mainly due to my more external role with the school. I cannot therefore comment on the extent to which such a process, if there was one, may have been used, nor whether complaints were received, nor whether complaints were recorded.

Trusted adult/confidante

45. The pupils were aware that as Chaplain, I was not fully on the staff and that I would be approachable through them making time to speak to me, or requesting to do so through the staff. As such, during my time in Keil I regularly made myself available to staff and students and could be contacted directly or indirectly. I was regularly in school and in the staff room and common room and pupils were told by the Head that I was available.
46. At QVS now there are posters and house hubs online to inform pupils of confidential reporting. They are told and can read online who these responses would be sent to and they are informed regularly of the place of the wellbeing centre for offloading, as well as of the availability of the staff, especially House Masters and the Head of Boarding.
47. This practice remained in place throughout my five years involvement in the school, however no children approached me in this way, which did not really surprise me. Very few school pupils in secondary education want to talk to the chaplain. QVS, however, has not been the same. As a fulltime member of staff who taught the pupils and worked in the boarding house, I have been approached to talk over grief issues and offered support to pupils who have struggled with pastoral issues.

“Abuse”

48. The school’s definition of “abuse”, which it applied in relation to the treatment of children at the school, was the standard safeguarding definition and constituted the sexual or emotional abuse of children in its care by staff or other pupils. There was zero tolerance for any form of bullying and all publications in Keil emphasised that.
49. That definition was passed through in-service training and directly to me through my line manager, John Cummings, and it was in existence when I was there. Although I did not attend in-service training, I was aware of the program and I was aware there were formal safeguarding and child protection policies. Safeguarding changes and

policies were updated in line with Scottish Government policy and there were posters around the school highlighting the safeguarding policy.

Child protection arrangements

50. I was informed personally through my line manager, Mr John Cummings, of the expectations on how children in the care of the school should be treated, cared for and protected against abuse, ill-treatment or inappropriate behaviour towards them. Pupils were regularly updated at assemblies with guidance on the policy of zero tolerance of bullying or abuse and they had sight of the written policy, which was posted around the school campus.
51. There was a formal process of guidance and instruction in place for staff on how to handle, and respond to, reports of abuse or ill-treatment of children by staff, by other adults, or by fellow pupils. That process involved communication with the Head directly to begin the investigation.
52. From memory, there was no discretion given to staff, including managerial staff, in relation to these matters. Staff followed the procedures on reporting of abuse.
53. The child protection arrangements that were in place to reduce the likelihood of abuse, ill-treatment, or inappropriate conduct by staff, or other adults, towards children at the school included pupils not being alone with staff without an open door. If staff were taking pupils out of school, pupils had to sit in the back of the minibus and staff in the front. Two staff were present on trips to ensure that there was always cover and observation. Staff received guidance in accordance with policy at the time.
54. I believe that this process worked, however I was not involved in the boarding houses and have no knowledge of how the boarding houses were staffed or the policy and method of practice within them.

External monitoring

55. I know that Inspectors visited the school, I think around 1995, and I believe they spoke with children in groups and they spoke with me. I do not know if staff were present when they spoke to the children. I am unaware of any feedback.

Record-keeping

56. I know nothing of the record-keeping within Keil School nor how it worked.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

57. I was never involved in any investigation on behalf of the school into allegations of abuse or ill-treatment of children at the school or into inappropriate behaviour by staff or others towards children. I cannot give any detail about any investigations.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

58. I was never involved in the handling of reports concerning historical abuse to the school, or of civil claims made against the school by former pupils.
59. I cannot give any detail on what the school's response may have been, or of any investigations, reports passed to any external bodies, or what conclusions may have been reached, had any such reports or claims been made.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

60. I became aware of an allegation of historical abuse against Bill Bain through the press and then through a conversation with the last Head of the establishment, Mr Tom Smith.
61. I have never given a statement to the police or the Crown concerning alleged abuse of children cared for at the school.

62. I have never given evidence at a trial concerning alleged abuse of children cared for at the school.

Convicted abusers

63. I am aware that Bill Bain was convicted of historical abuse in Keil School.
64. I did have personal dealings with him, but Bill was always a quiet man, so any interaction in the staff room was always stilted. I was not involved with Bill Bain in any way other than through contact in the staff room or at a formal school gathering.
65. I was not concerned about Bill Bain being an abuser and no other staff members ever raised concerns with me about him.
66. I am unaware of Bill Bain's recruitment or his previous employment history or work experience. I do know that Bill was a science graduate from Oxford or Cambridge and I believe he had a postgraduate certificate in Education (PGCE).
67. I do not know whether he was subject to supervision or monitoring and if he was, I was not aware.
68. I am not aware of any previous allegation of abuse of which the school or staff had been made aware, nor whether any such allegation had been investigated by the school or other body.

Helping the Inquiry

69. Although Keil and QVS may be similar in size, my working knowledge of QVS is under current guidance and legislation which has been far more honed than I recall from the early 1990's. At QVS all buildings are secured. Child protection is a frequent aspect of inset at QVS, with external speakers and with enhanced Child Protection training for all Housemasters.

70. These aspects may have occurred at Keil, but I was not present when they would have been delivered. I really do not feel, however, that Keil was a school lacking in perception and appraisal.
71. Every establishment requires to review its policies and make amendments where it appears that they are required. We have enhanced the ability for pupils to report incidents which concern them anonymously, or confidentially, without being seen talking to staff face to face, which allows them far greater confidence to share concerns.
72. As someone who moved into teaching in a boarding school and serves as a housemaster, staff must be beyond reproach.
73. Continual school training on the current government policies and updating and reminding staff of current protocols is vital.
74. Promoted staff within the houses must be vigilant when tutors are on to ensure parity of experience throughout their week. They must pick up on practice which requires attention, speak with staff and pass on any concerns they may have where appropriate.
75. There must be continual reminders to the pupils of what to expect. I was aware of regular expectations that were delivered at assemblies at Keil where I was present. There was zero tolerance for bullying and there was the ability to approach staff if they had any concerns.
76. There must be confidentiality of reporting and sound and robust maintaining of records.
77. Statements should be taken in the pupil's voice and they must be allowed to speak. Pupils must never be interrogated and any information learned must be passed to the Child Protection Officers.

78. As at Keil, policies should always be on display to ensure that pupils are aware of what to do should their named person be the one against whom the concern is raised, allowing them to know how to do this. I did think staff at Keil had the confidence to raise concerns they may have had.
79. Good practice should be shared throughout a school and there should be networking with other boarding schools in general.
80. It must be ensured that GIRFEC embodies the requirement to oversee the wellbeing of every child.
81. I would have loved it if children had felt they could have approached me with any concerns they may have had and I am saddened that they hadn't. I am saddened that some children went through what they did and suffered in silence.
82. 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..... 10 September 2020