

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

DZK

Support person present: No.

1. My name is DZK. My date of birth is 1969. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to Fettes College

2. I grew up in rural South-West Scotland. My parents were and . I went to Primary School but when I finished my primary education my parents decided that I should go to Fettes as there were no real alternatives locally that did A Levels. My father had gone to a boarding school and that may also have influenced their decision.

Fettes College

3. I went to Fettes in September 1979 at the age of ten. I don't really recall my first day there other than the fact that, for the first few days, I was really homesick. I was in the junior school and we didn't interact with the senior school. We were separated from the main school by the sport's pitches. I stayed in the headmaster's house, and we stayed in two dorms of six plus two other boys in a twin-room.
4. There were fourteen of us and all the boys in the dorm were across two year groups of about ten to twelve years of age. In the dorm we would have three bunk-beds, a set of drawers each, maybe a wardrobe and pegs to hang our clothes. You were allowed

to have personal possessions but I don't recall bringing anything with me. I remember I never liked going back after term breaks but I eventually got over that.

5. There weren't that many boarders at the time and many of those boarding stayed in houses around the town. For instance, a friend of mine lived in a house in Ravelston Dykes in Edinburgh. The family he stayed with had children at the school and took in two boarders as well. That was a common thing at the time.
6. When I moved up to Senior School, I was twelve, I was in Kimmerghame House and there were seven of us in the Third Form. Four of us were in one dorm with a prefect with three in another dorm though the other dorm didn't have a prefect.
7. In Fourth Form we were all in a dorm together and in Fifth Form the dorms had separate cubicles with walls that were about four feet in height. In Fifth year you also got a study while in Third and Fourth it was a common room you studied in. In Sixth Form you might be assigned to oversee one of the younger dorms.

Routine at Fettes College

8. We would get up at 7:30 am then get washed and dressed then head to the dining room at 7:45 am for breakfast after which we would brush our teeth. We would then have assembly in the chapel at 8:30 am and then be in class for 9:00 am where we would stay till lunchtime. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons were dedicated to sports rather than the classroom. Wednesday afternoon was combined cadet force. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday we would have further lessons from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. We played rugby in the winter and hockey or cross-country running in spring and cricket and athletics in the summer.
9. From time to time there would be inter-house competitions where the various houses would compete against each other and you competed against boys of your own age. On a Wednesday afternoon we would be involved in the Combined Cadet Force which

mainly involved marching about and sometimes shooting. There would be further lessons after this.

10. After school we would go to our dorms or common room followed by dinner. There would then be prep from 7:00 pm till 9:00 pm and we would be in bed with lights out with times staggered between 9:40 pm and 10:30 pm depending on what year you were in.

Mealtimes/Food

11. I doubt if anybody would have described the food as good but I never had a problem with it and I always ate what was put in front of me. There was never a problem if you didn't eat something you didn't like.

Trips and holidays

12. Trips were not common, especially in Junior School. You did do your Duke of Edinburgh award in Senior School and would go away sometimes at the weekend and camp overnight.

School

13. The teachers were fine though I would describe some as very mediocre. There was a big difference in the environment between the Junior and Senior Schools and I would say the Junior School was fine other than it being upsetting being away from home at such a young age. In Junior School you were always in the same class but when you moved into the Senior School you would go to different classrooms for different subjects.

Healthcare

14. Each House had a matron. She would be in her office in the evenings and you would go to see her with whatever health problems you had. If she thought it was warranted

you would go to the sanatorium where every morning a doctor would come in and see you. It's unlikely that matron would have seen any injuries as a result of bullying as the bullying tended to be dead legs and dead arms, the type of injuries that didn't leave marks, or it would have been psychological. If a boy went to matron with an injury that had been caused by bullying, and I cannot say for sure they ever did, they would almost certainly have lied about how they received their injuries as, like a prison, you didn't grass.

15. Staff would never go looking for bullying behaviour or evidence of bullying and never tried to understand what boys between thirteen and eighteen were actually doing. We were just left to our own devices.

Visits/Inspections

16. I know there were inspections to see if the school was meeting the academic standards but this did not involve us boys getting an opportunity to speak to anybody about what was actually happening in the school with regards the bullying. I know these inspections happened because the school paper, which I don't recall the name of, reported on an inspection on at least one occasion.

Family contact

17. There was one weekend each half of term from Saturday afternoon through to Sunday night when you could go home to your parents. Other than that the only contact was by phone though there was only one phone between eighty boys and after evening prayers there was always a rush to get to it.
18. When I was in Third Form I was the youngest in the year. At the evening prayers there was a set sitting formation and after prayers we would all stand and shake the housemaster's hand. Because I was the youngest I was always the first to leave so, every night, I had to get to the phone and keep it for whoever had asked me to do so during the day. Thereafter everybody just queued up to use the phone.

Discipline

19. Sometimes I would get lines from the head prefect for things like talking in chapel but there was no corporal punishment at the school in my time or than on one occasion, when I was in first year in 1979, two students got hit with the slipper or training shoe over their backside by the headmaster. I'd rather not name the boys in question.
20. Now and again the prefect for my year could get me off of doing the lines which I suppose made it a two way thing with me doing the odd job for him and him getting me off of lines. Punishments by prefects were not recorded. You could also get detention or maybe be told to pick up rubbish from the grounds.

Abuse at Fettes College

21. Bullying was rife, absolutely endemic and was a constant background to my time in Fettes. There were a few people in particular who were badly bullied though I was not as badly bullied as some of them. There was one person in my year who I haven't seen for years who was so badly affected that he changed his name. He wanted a new identity because he was so damaged by the bullying he received, though I would point out that I have no first-hand knowledge of this being the driver for his change of name. I know he did change his name and I have heard second-hand this was why
22. The bullying against him, and I don't wish to name him, was more psychological than physical and the bullying came mainly from his peer group. Not having the support of your peer group, which he did not have, made life in the school more difficult to bear. It meant that life in the school became a much more lonely experience.
23. There was another kid who arrived new to Fourth Form and he was into trains, a train spotter who had various books on the subject. Train spotters have a certain image about them and can be the butt of jokes and he certainly became the butt of many a joke. He was so bullied that he was gone from the school by Christmas.

24. The bullying against me was physical violence or the threat of it. This meant that as well as feeling unpleasant when you received the violence, you also lived with the fear of the violence which in itself is a form of bullying.
25. I mentioned earlier about holding the phone for anybody who asked me but I wouldn't have considered that as fagging though fagging did exist. You would have to do whatever a prefect asked you to which, broadly, was fine. It would involve things like cleaning their shoes or bringing them back rolls and sausage from breakfast, things which I did, as they couldn't be bothered going to breakfast themselves. Some people probably look back and had a worse time than I did but I didn't see the fagging as a problem. I certainly don't look back on it and consider it a difficult memory.
26. There were seven of us in Third Form and we were a tight group with no bullying amongst us. The bullying tended to be from the upper years downwards. There were two characters in my house from Sixth Form, when I was in Fourth Form, who I do not wish to name as I see no value in naming them. These two were the principal bullies in my house.
27. These two would come into our dorm after lights out and sometimes would just have a chat then leave. However, sometimes they would systematically beat us up. I don't mean bloodied noses and loose teeth but they would go round the room hitting us until they gave us a dead arm or a dead leg. This could happen three nights in a row and then not at all for maybe a couple of weeks. It was completely random.
28. They always started with the oldest first and worked down through the age group which meant, being the youngest, I was always last. I had to sit in bed and wait my turn and sometimes, for no discernible reason, they stopped at the guy next to me and I didn't get beat up every time. This still meant that I would watch the others getting hit and be in fearful anticipation of my turn.
29. One night, sometime about early 1983, one of the prefects was in our room and we told him about these two characters. The others said that everybody got beat up except

me and that I hardly ever got beaten up. The prefect then said that I was the only one who actually deserved a beating and then he jumped on me. I do not wish to name this prefect.

30. The prefect started beating me up and was on top of me hitting me when the door opened and the housemaster walked in. He saw the prefect beating me up but simply said "Oh. It's you" before turning round and walking back out. Basically he was condoning what was happening.
31. It's this sort of thing that I want to point out to the Inquiry. The staff knew that bullying went on but turned their backs on it. They are culpable for constantly looking away and not even trying to understand what was going on between the year groups. I won't say the staff knew exactly what was going on but they knew something was happening and actively avoided finding out what was happening.
32. My son is twelve and the same age I was when I started at Fettes. I remember on my first night the housemaster came in and said "When you come to the Senior School we call you men and we expect you to behave like men". And that's what they did, all the time they would call you "men". You were never referred to as "boy", always "men". I think that was the excuse they used to not look too closely to what was going on. Their attitude was that we were men, grown-ups and as such didn't need to be shepherded by them.
33. I look at my son now and see myself joining the school back then. My son is a child. He is a 12 year old child. I was a child. It is an absurdity to suggest that we were men.
34. The two characters that beat us up were simply part of the culture and there were no boundaries in place to stop them behaving the way they did. As an example of this I would refer you to the housemaster walking in, seeing me being be bullied and walking out again. Whether they themselves had been physically abused I do not know but they were just bullies. I wouldn't say they were nasty, it's just that they enjoyed doing stupid things. Nobody stopped them behaving that way and nobody tried to understand what was going on. Staff probably considered it to be character building, almost what

people paid for at a boarding school. As boys there we didn't feel as if there was anybody we could speak to.

35. When I was in Fifth Form, the winter of 83/84 and it would have been a Saturday or Sunday night, I was talking to some Fourth Formers. It would have been round about 7:00 pm. These same two characters came in and grabbed hold of me before hanging me out of the second floor window. I was about fifteen at the time and although a couple of others witnessed the incident I'd rather not name them though I do know who they were.
36. I think they had hold of my lower legs and my waist was well out of the window and I genuinely believed they were going to drop me. I remember thinking that, if I was going to survive this, I would have to angle my fall and hopefully land on something soft. If they had dropped me I was convinced I would receive a serious injury and quite possibly die. This lasted about thirty seconds before they dragged me back in and said "Look at your face. You've gone all white. Did you honestly think we would drop you?" I don't think I replied but I think I thought "Yes, it crossed my mind".
37. I think I then went and told others in my year about what they had done to which they replied "They're idiots aren't they". That in and of itself was instructive of the environment in the school. Something like that happened, something horrific, but we just accepted it and moved on. There was nothing we could do and we just accepted that that was the life we were living.
38. The incident concerning me being hung out the window was never reported to staff. You must understand that we lived in an environment where one did not grass. That was the greatest sin of all. The wider culture also gave one an impression that staff would not listen. I know now, from a distance of maturity, that I should have gone straight to the headmaster and demanded their immediate expulsion. That isn't the thought of a 15 year old boy in an environment where bullying is going on all of the time.

39. Those two characters left at the end of that year and my last two years at Fettes were actually quite pleasant. It was really only when they were at the school that there was a cloud over you every day. I'm not saying we got bullied every day but it was always hanging over you like a cloud that it could happen.
40. When I was in Third Form I was in an area where we did the registry every morning. This area was in the space in the block that held the study rooms. A guy in Sixth Form would use a hockey stick to hit a ball and you had to move fast or get hit. Hockey balls are fairly solid and it would hurt like hell if you got hit. While staff were there occasionally it was normally run by prefects and the hockey ball incidents would not have happened with staff present.
41. The bullying always came from the years above. We weren't bullied by people in our own year with the very odd exception like the boy who changed his name. His experiences would have been worse than mine because I had friends and allies while he had none which would have made him more lonely and I think the abuse for him would have been more emotional.
42. I think towards the end of my time there the bullying started to die down, possibly because it became a co-educational school. When I was in Third Form I would say that there was about 10% girls in the school, all in sixth form. By the time I was in Sixth Form the ratio of boys to girls was 50/50 and I think that helped change the dynamics of the place. Certainly by the time I left Fettes it had changed dramatically.

Leaving Fettes College

43. I left Fettes in July 1986 when I was seventeen. After leaving I went to university then took a year off then moved to London to become an accountant and I have lived there ever since.
44. I don't go to any of the reunions at Fettes. In 1987 I went back for Founder's Day but I haven't been back since, possibly because of the distance from London though I

think I would like to go back just to meet some of the people who were in my year, not specifically to see the school which I'm indifferent to.

Impact

45. I don't really know what the impact is of having been at Fettes as I don't have anything to compare it with, there isn't a control version of me who didn't go to Fettes. I don't have self-belief, don't believe in my own abilities or in myself. I am not comfortable meeting people for the first time. I lack confidence which is a drag both professionally and socially. But has that anything to do with Fettes or is that just me? I don't know.

Lessons to be Learned

46. There is a massive difference in the way schools have an awareness of care for kids these days, a more pastoral care. In my kid's school the three rules are "Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind". That sort of thinking breeds a whole mind-set that bullying isn't ok and that we don't do that here.
47. My son is in year six and takes great delight in looking after the younger pupils. It's almost a badge of honour to care for and look after the younger children. The whole culture has changed and I'm sure Fettes has changed in a similar fashion, though I doubt if it was ever a leader in such thinking, more a follower.
48. You can't just let a bunch of kids run wild, there has to be involvement when kids are living together 24/7. The school has to police what is going on and they have to have standards and deal with the situation when such standards fall short. There was none of that in Fettes and, if you were clever about it, you could almost get away with anything.

Hopes for the Inquiry

49. If the Inquiry shines a light about what used to go on in Fettes then that can only be for the good. Maybe by shining a light on Fettes it will help the place realise they need to improve significantly to justify the fees they charge.
50. Fettes is not a cheap place to send a child, especially those that board there. I feel that for the money people pay they deserve to know that their children will not only receive a good education but will also be taught education in its broadest terms, including how to behave.
51. When I was there, Fettes had a mixture of teachers. Some were good but some were very mediocre and as such I would not have said it was a great school. I feel that it probably still isn't a great school, I feel it's probably a very average school and, given the fees they charge, somebody should point out to Fettes that they are not nearly as good as they think they are.

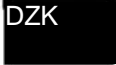
Further Observations

52. I have chosen not to name any individuals in this statement. I have not named the students who were subject to bullying because I think it is their choice whether they come forward or not. I have not named the student bullies or the prefects because I think they are, in a perverse way, also victims of the environment that we lived in. They did not have sufficient boundaries placed around them, did not get a proper grounding in what was acceptable and what was not. I do not condone anything that they did and some the behaviour is reprehensible, but I see no value in naming them for the purposes of this Inquiry. In almost every case I know their names.
53. I have not named individual teachers for a variety of reasons. Individually they were also operatives within a wider system. They were adults and could have been expected to apply greater discretion and sense to what they saw, but they were not the only ones going with the status quo. All of the teachers behaved like this and so it seems churlish to single out anyone in particular. Again, this does not mean that I

excuse what happened. I am also confident that the teachers can be identified if the Inquiry wishes. I have given dates which will enable the school to identify them if it wishes to. I will leave that judgement to others to determine.

54. The overall point is that the environment of the school was conducive to bullying. It did not encourage it, but it did nothing to identify and stop it. No guidance was given to senior students with positions of responsibility as to what was acceptable and what was not. No guidance was given to the broader student body as to how we should behave and what we could do if we were unhappy with behaviour. We lived in this place 24/7. We had no-where to turn to.
55. I have said it before and I will say it again, there was a conduct that was akin to what I understand is the norm in prison – do not grass. No other code of conduct was ever given to us by the school. The teaching staff could have provided more guidance, undertaken more supervision of free time, made more of an effort to understand how we were feeling and what was actually going on in boarding houses when lessons and sport were over. The school's failure to do this, and thus to create an environment in which bullying behaviour could carry on unchecked, is the failure that I would like recognised.
56. 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...  DZK

Dated...  11 / 2 / 20