

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MZY

Support person present: No

1. My name is MZY. I was known as Brother MZY when I was part of the Marist Congregation. My date of birth is the 1947. I am 71 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before joining The Marist Brothers and as a Marist Brother between 1966 – 1967

2. I had wanted to join the Marist Order because I wanted to join a Catholic religious order. I was an altar boy when I was a child and I loved that role. I considered being a priest but I also wanted to follow in the footsteps of my mother and become a teacher. The Marist Brothers were renowned teachers and were involved in teaching all over the world.
3. I remember I was present when a Marist Brother called Brother Vincent visited my school and did a presentation on the Marist Brothers. That convinced me to join the Marist Order. I wanted to be part of the religious life and I never regretted my decision to join the Order. I still consider that my philosophies in life are based on the Marist way of life and although no longer a Brother I still have connections with the Order.

4. I was attending primary school at Lady of St George's School in Glasgow and at that time I was considered to be quite clever. There was a scheme called Prep and it meant that if you were academically able you could enter secondary school a year early, before Christmas and go through to the summer. I managed to do this and went to Lourdes Secondary School in Glasgow where I remained until the following summer in 1958.
5. I went to the juniorate school at Hetland House near Dumfries in [REDACTED] 1959. This was the Marist Brothers training school for preparation to join the Marist Congregation. I also sat my O'levels. I was there for four years until I went to Spain as a postulant - novice in 1963 to continue my religious studies and also study the rules and constitution of the Marist Order. I studied in Spain until 1965 and joined the Marist Congregation after taking my yearly vows. I returned to Scotland as a Marist Brother and resided at Kinharvie House outside Dumfries where I spent a further year studying. I sat my higher qualifications at St Joseph's College in Dumfries.
6. When I was nineteen years old in [REDACTED] 1966 I was sent by the Marist Provincial, Brother Gall to St Columba's College in Largs to be a teacher. I left the Marist Brothers in [REDACTED] 1967.
7. The only appointment I had as a teacher with the Marist Brothers was the year I spent teaching at St Columba's College in Largs in 1966. That appointment was made for me by the Marist Provincial at the time Brother Gall. I had no teacher training qualifications. I had no teaching experience.
8. I made annual vows to The Marist Order which after five years should lead on to you to make your Perpetual Vows and a full commitment to becoming a Marist Brother. I made the annual vows but left the Marist Order before I made my Perpetual Vows of obedience, chastity and poverty.

9. It is much easier to leave the Marist Order if you have not taken your Perpetual Vows as this is agreed at a local level between yourself and the Provincial. If you take your Perpetual Vows you must receive permission from Rome as you have made your commitment for life.

Leaving the Marist Brothers in 1967

10. The reason I left the Marist Brothers was because I wanted to go to university and teacher training college to qualify as a teacher. I had assumed that after obtaining my higher level qualifications at St Joseph's School I would be going to university and that I would remain a member of the Marist Order. The Provincial spoke to me and told me that I was required to do an extra year at St Columba's.
11. The hardest vow to make is the vow of obedience and I felt that I couldn't make this vow as I was very keen to go to university and to become a qualified teacher. I had a long chat with the Provincial of the Order and realised that I was not as spiritually committed as I should be and I decided to leave the Order.
12. Despite being married for forty years I still need time on my own to read, contemplate and to pray. I am still in touch with the Marist Order and do some translating for them. I feel that I still have a connection with the Marist Order. The number of Marist Brothers in Western Europe is falling and the members in France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Britain and Ireland have now all combined and are under the leadership of Brother Robert from Belgium.

Career

13. After I left the Marist Order in 1967 I went on to Glasgow University where I completed my degree and went to Teacher Training College. I spent the rest of my

life teaching at schools in the Glasgow area. My first school was St Pius in Drumchapel, Glasgow. I was there from 1972 to 1976. I also taught at St Roch's Secondary school in Glasgow between [REDACTED] 1976 and [REDACTED] 1992. I was involved in guidance teaching and was [REDACTED]. I went to Turnbull High School in Glasgow in 1992 as [REDACTED] until I retired in [REDACTED] 2007 after 35 years.

14. All the schools I taught in after leaving the Marist Brothers were day schools. I didn't teach in any boarding schools. My main role in teaching was teaching [REDACTED] [REDACTED] but I also had a post of [REDACTED]. I got married in 1976 and I have a son and daughter and four grandchildren.

Childcare qualifications and training

15. I had no childcare qualifications or training when I spent a year as a Marist Brother teaching at St Columba's College, Largs between [REDACTED] 1966 and [REDACTED] 1967. All my teaching qualifications were obtained after I left the Marist Order.

The childcare course

16. While I was a member of the Marist Order I didn't attend any child care courses. I did attend courses in relation to teacher training after I left the Order and became a teacher.

Time spend working at St Columba's College in Largs

17. I was sent to St Columba's College in [REDACTED] 1966 and I left in [REDACTED] 1967 when I left the Marist Order. I think that I was sent to St Columba's College to gain active life experience of the Marist Order and community life. I had only ever been with other

Brothers of my own age and had no experience of what life was like as a Brother in a mixed age community. It was a small setting and an ideal place to gain some teaching experience and be part of a small community. It was a place where children were sent by their parents to learn and was a nice easy introduction to teaching.

18. It was also the case that there was no requirement to be qualified as a teacher to teach at a private boarding school. I don't know if the other Brothers at St Columba's had any teaching qualifications.
19. The reason that I left the Marist Order in 1967 after teaching for a year at St Columba's was because the Provincial of the Order decided that I should be sent back to St Columba's for a further year and that I should delay going to university. There was a vacancy still at St Columba's in 1967 and they felt that I should fill it. After much thought I decided to leave the Order.

St Columba's College, Largs [REDACTED] 1966 – [REDACTED] 1967

First impressions

20. My memories of St Columba's are very vague as it was over fifty years ago and I was only there for one academic year. The building no longer exists and after I left I didn't go back to see it.
21. I was very excited to get my first placement although I was very apprehensive. I recall that I was only used to being with Brothers of my own age and all of a sudden I was working with Brothers who were much older. It was a very pleasant place to stay.

Layout at St Columba's

22. There were three classrooms and I remember that in my classroom there were two rows of about eight desks in each row. I taught the children aged eight to ten I think that one of the other classrooms was the same size as mine and taught the children aged ten to twelve. The third classroom of younger children were aged eight and under.
23. There were day pupils and boarders. The boarders slept upstairs in the main building. I slept in a separate building which had a sitting room, four bedrooms, a shower and a toilet. I shared that building with Brother MFN who was a much older Brother who lived there but took no part in teaching or working at the school.
24. On the other side of the road was a sports field that was surrounded by a wall. The field stretched down to the sea. There was also grounds at the back of the school where there was a wooded area. I also have a vague memory of a hut where the children could play to the side of the main building. The children spent a lot of time playing in the sports field.

The children at St Columba's College, Largs

25. All the children were of primary school age from five to twelve. St Columba's was the feeder school for secondary education at St Joseph's College in Dumfries, St Mungo's in Glasgow and St Aloysius in Glasgow. I think all the children were Catholic and some were day pupils. The boarders staying at the school often went home at the weekends to their own families. There were some boarders who stayed over the weekend as they were the children of parents who were working abroad or living too far away.
26. I think that there were between thirty and forty boys at the school. There were some pupils who had siblings at the school and I seem to remember a family of three boys who were all in different classes. I think that they wore a uniform with a pale blue blazer but I can't be sure. I don't think that there were any special arrangements to

keep siblings together. I think that the dorms and classes were all based on ages. It was a very small school.

My role at St Columba's, Largs

27. I was at St Columba's as a teacher and I took no formal duties in looking after the children out with the classroom hours. I also assisted in supervising some of the sporting activities or playtimes for the boys but the main responsibility for the care of the boys outside the classrooms fell to Brother David Germanus.
28. I know that the school was for Catholic boys and that it was for boarders and day pupils. I know that the boys paid fees but I had no knowledge of how it was run. I do remember that the school had an open day and invited local people to look round.

Management structure

29. There were four working Brothers living at the school. Brother **MJD** who was the **SNR** of the community and I regarded him as the **SNR** Brother **MLA** and I were the other teachers. Brother Germanus was in charge of the care of the children.

Brothers at St Columba's

30. I was only at St Columba's for a year and the Brothers who were there were, Brother **MJD** who was **SNR** and taught the younger boys. Brother **MLA** was a teacher and taught the older boys. I was responsible for the middle age group. Brother Germanus was in charge of the care of the boarders and had responsibility for looking after the children out with classroom hours. Brother **MFN** who was retired Brother was the only other Brother residing at St Columba's and he was a very old man who stayed in the same out building that I lived in. He took no part in working at the College. Those were the only Brothers at the school when I was there.

I think that Brother MJD Brother MLA and Brother Germanus resided in the main building where the boys slept.

Staff at St Columba's

31. I assume that there was someone who did the cooking and cleaning but I can't recall who that was. I didn't do any domestic chores and I don't recall the boys performing any chores as they were far too young. There were no lay teachers at the school.

Access to the children

32. I suppose all the Brothers working at St Columba's would have access to the children. I don't think that there was a need for anyone else to have access. The main person out with the classroom who dealt with the children was Brother Germanus. Outside the classroom I had very little contact with the children. I don't recall any rules where you weren't allowed to be alone with the children. The children were not allowed to visit my living quarters.
33. There may have been some Brothers who came to St Columba's for a rest as there were a few spare rooms. I don't recall a steady stream of Brothers or anything like that. I do recall that Brother MLA had a brother who was also a Marist Brother and he would come and stay on occasion.

Routine and life at St Columba's

Admission

34. I don't know what happened in the admission process as I started when the term was under way. I do recall one boy who was already very ill and died at home whilst

he was attending the school. I was told about his medical condition before he came to the school. I think his name was [REDACTED]

Daily routine

35. I was not involved in getting the boys up in the morning and I am unable to tell you about their routine. I used to get up in the morning with the other Brothers and say prayers at about six thirty. Some of the Brothers who could would then go to mass in Largs at eight. I think that when we got back to the school at about half past eight the children would be having their breakfast.

Sleeping arrangements

36. I know that the boys slept in dormitories but my only role at the school was teaching and Brother Germanus dealt with the actual care and routine that the boys had. I think that the younger boys went to bed earlier. I know that all the children were in bed by nine because the Brother's would meet up then and say prayers.

Washing and bathing

37. I have no idea about the washing and bathing routines as I never assisted Brother Germanus to supervise the washing and bathing.

Food

38. The food was okay and the Brother's had a separate dining room where they would eat. I may have had the odd meal with the children but I can't remember. Brother Germanus supervised the meals. I think I ate the same food as the boys.

Clothes

39. I think that the pupils at St Columba's did wear a uniform but I can't remember much about it. All the clothes and uniform would have been provided by the relatives of the children.

Chores

40. I don't recall the boys doing any chores and I assume that there were cleaners because I don't recall doing any domestic chores either and I assume someone did my washing. I think that the boarders had to keep their own bed areas tidy.

Leisure time

41. The boys would play in the field across the road. I remember that they had cricket bats and stumps. There was a very small number of pupils as a lot of the boys were day pupils. I think that the day pupils would have outnumbered the boarders. I had no responsibility for the boy's leisure time. I think that I can remember sports days but we didn't compete against other schools.
42. In my own private time I would correct work and prepare lessons. I tried to keep up with keep up my studies and I did a correspondence course. I would also have time for private reading and prayer. I read books in Spanish and French to keep up my language skills.

Possessions and pocket money

43. I think that the boarders had their own possessions. I don't know about pocket money but I have a vague memory of a tuck shop.

Holidays

44. The school would close down to the pupils and most of the staff would make their own arrangements to visit home or other communities. The Brothers would also go on a weeklong retreat. There were some members of the Marist Order who would come to stay during the holiday period as it was a nice place to relax.

Trips

45. I don't recall any trips away as we were at the seaside and had everything we needed. People came to Largs for trips because there was so much to do.

Birthdays and Christmas

46. Children would go home for Christmas and I would visit my parents or go down to Kinharvie House to be with the young Brothers who were living there.
47. We would acknowledge the children's birthdays and there may have been a cake for the boarders. They would get presents from their families.

Bed wetting

48. I did not have any dealings with the children in the mornings or through the night so I have no idea how bed wetters were dealt with. I was not aware of any issues with regards to bed wetting.

Schooling

49. The schooling was all done on the premises in three classrooms. The children were taught normal primary school subjects. Religious Instruction was an important part of the school curriculum. The science subjects were basic as we didn't have a laboratory.

50. We also prepared the children for the sacraments. All of the children were very well behaved. There were no discipline problems. Although I had no training I did not feel out of my depth and was able to teach basic literacy, numeracy and associated subjects. Brother ^{MLA} was able to mentor me and advise me when required. I had no formal training from the other staff members when I arrived.
51. I think that the children were given homework and the boarders had a time allocated in the evening to do their homework. The children were also taught life and social skills about how to behave properly in company and how to share things.

Healthcare

52. I don't know how healthcare worked. I recently checked the internet about St Columba's and reference was made to a matron but I can't recall her being there when I was teaching. If anyone was ill Brother ^{MJD} the ^{SNR} would be told and he would deal with it. I think that dental care was dealt with by the boy's parents. I imagine that if there was an emergency the school would deal with it but I was never involved in organising health visits.

Deaths

53. The only person that died when I was at St Columba's was one of the pupils who had a heart problem and passed away at his own home. His name was [REDACTED] and he came from Greenock. It was not a surprise when he died as he was already very ill. His parents were just trying give normality to his life as they were aware of the severity of his illness.

Religious instruction

54. There was always prayers at the beginning and end of the day. There were prayers said before and after every meal. The children were also prepared for the sacraments. The boarders would go to church on Sunday and we would all walk as a

group. We would also attend church for the holidays of Obligation which occurred during school term. The church was only 500 yards from the school.

Visitors/inspections

55. The families could visit at any time but it would be very unusual for families to visit as a lot of the children went home at weekends or were day pupils. The other families were living and working abroad.
56. I don't recall any official inspections as this was not a social care home it was a private boarding school. I think that the Brother Provincial of The Marist Order did visit to see how things were going and visit the Brothers in the community. I don't think that fully independent schools were subject to any inspections in those days.
57. I have no memory of any inspections of the school. I think we were independent and I think that the only way we would be inspected was if there was a complaint made to the police or other authority.

Discipline and punishment at St Columba's

58. I don't remember ever having to discipline any of the children at St Columba's and I can't recall any occasion when a child needed to be disciplined. I think that Brother MLA told me when I started that if there were any issues I was to refer them to him but I just don't recall any incidents. I just don't recall any corporal punishment. It was just not the "done thing" the school was so small that discipline was very good.
59. I never saw any peer abuse or bullying when I was at St Columba's. I learned a few years ago and now know that there were incidents of abuse involving Brother Germanus. I learned about Brother Germanus when I went on to the Wikipedia site for St Columba's as I wanted to see a picture of the building. I have been reflecting on this but can honestly say that there was nothing that rang alarm bells with me at the time and I certainly didn't witness any form of abuse. I have never been accused of being an abuser at St Columba's.

Time spent working with Brother Germanus

60. I spent the least period of time working with Brother Germanus as he was in charge of the welfare of the children while I was dealing with the education and teaching of the children. I only learned of the accusations of abuse made against Brother Germanus a few years ago.
61. I think that Brother Germanus would have been late 40's or early 50's when I spent a year teaching at St Columba's. I only just learned that his first name was David. I never witnessed any incident of abuse involving Brother Germanus and was quite shocked to read the media coverage of his alleged abuse.

Final thoughts on St Columba's College in light of allegations

62. The first that I knew about the abuse at Columba's was when Brother Brendon addressed the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry in 2017. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
63. I was very surprised that there were any allegations of abuse at St Columba's as I was never aware of anything like that happening at any time. I was only there for a year but it was such a small place I felt I would have been aware of anything like that going on. I had no cause for concern. I have never heard of any allegations against Brothers MJD, MLA or MFN

Records and record keeping

64. You would meet the parents regularly when they came to pick the children up. There would also be an annual school report which I would pass on to Brother MJD and he would send it out to the parents. If there were any issues I would pass them on to Brother MJD. I can't remember ever having to report any of the children to Brother

MJD as the children were all very well behaved. I don't recall any other records being kept apart from me keeping a record of test results sat during the year.

Prior statements

65. I have never been required to provide a statement to any other person regarding my time teaching at St Columba's College apart from being contacted by the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.

Closing thoughts

66. I am very shocked that allegations of abuse are made against members of a religious order who are devoted to the care and education of children. I am shocked that they have taken vows which they have not upheld. It horrifies me that a religious person who has taken a vow of chastity would sexually abuse a child.
67. I feel so sorry for children who have been abused by people they felt that they could trust to educate them and keep them safe. It is possible that my recollections may have been affected by the passage of time as it was fifty years ago. I was not aware of any abuse taking place and I am sure that the alarm bells would have rung if that was the case.
68. I have since had a long career in teaching and have a lot of experience in guidance teaching. I acknowledge that the emotional and psychological abuse alleged against Brother Germanus who told two boys that they would never see their dead brother again is abuse. There is no other way to describe it. I read about Brother Germanus online when I was preparing to give my own statement.

69. When I first started teaching corporal punishment was a legal option which today would be regarded as abusive. Times have changed along with the definition of abuse.

70. 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.... MZY

Dated... 25/6/19