

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Marion MUETZELFELDT

Support person present: No

1. My name is Marion Agnes Sarah Muetzeldorf. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1947. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I graduated from Royal Holloway College, University of London in 1968 with a degree in Maths and Physics, Category 2(i). From 1968 to 1971, I was employed as a research assistant at the Nuffield Institute of Medical Research, Oxford. From 1971 to 1975, I was a mathematics teacher at Landsdowne House School, Edinburgh.
3. In 1975, I became a lecturer in mathematics at Napier University, Edinburgh. I remained there until 1977. I taught mathematics at the American School, Royal Terrace, Edinburgh from 1977 to 1979.
4. I moved to Merchiston Castle School in 1979 where I was a teacher of mathematics until 2018.

Employment with Merchiston Castle School

5. I was employed by Merchiston Castle School as a part-time teacher of mathematics from 1979 until 1985 and taught full-time from 1985 until 2018. I became Head of the

Mathematics Department in 1996 and held that post until 2015. From 2000 until 2015, I was Director of Studies, also known as Deputy Head Academic.

6. I do not know what processes the school followed when I was recruited. I was not registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland when I was recruited. I was employed by Donald Forbes, the then Head teacher.
7. As a teacher of mathematics, my line manager was, in the first instance, Charles Windass and secondly Peter Arter. I was in constant contact with them and received all the help I required. As the Director of Studies, my line manager was Andrew Hunter. Retrospectively, a management course when I became Director of Studies would have helped me. I was a member of the Common Room before becoming Director of Studies and advice on dealing with adults rather than children would have been helpful.

Policy

8. I did not have any involvement in, or responsibility for, policy in relation to the care, including the residential care, of children. My involvement was purely on the academic side of the school.

Strategic Planning

9. Most strategic planning in an independent school was about keeping the numbers in the school at a sustainable level. I was not involved with any discussion about abuse. We had a child protection officer called Mrs Prini Garcia and a Governor called Sally Kuennsberg, who were dedicated to child protection.
10. My recollection is that the school's strategic approach was concerned with whether we should extend the entry age downwards and whether we should take girls.

Other staff

11. I managed the academic staff at the school and as such, I chaired the Heads of Department meetings. I kept a very close eye on monitoring the progress of the pupils. I was in constant contact with the Heads of Department as they supplied me with data and reported directly to me.
12. If dips in academic performance were observed, discussions were not of possible abuse but of overloading of a student. Investigations to explore why dips were occurring routinely happened. The investigations were by the subject teachers.

Recruitment of staff

13. I was involved with recruitment of staff. I interviewed all staff recruited for the academic side of the school.
14. Sharon Dow, the headmaster's secretary, managed all job adverts and arranged interviews. References were followed up by her and the headmaster. Financial details were managed by the Bursar and the Accounts Department.
15. References from former employers were always obtained and used as part of the employment process. Referees were spoken to. Academic appointments did not require to be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland or the General Teaching Council because this was not a requirement for independent schools.

Staff training, supervision, appraisal and evaluation

16. I was involved with the training, personal development, appraisal and evaluation of staff. I instigated the staff appraisal system and a lesson observation system. Everything was recorded meticulously and records reside with the school.

17. Every year each member of staff was appraised with respect to their teaching and co-curricular involvement. I interviewed all of the staff members to discuss progress and future plans. Everything was documented and held by the school.

Living arrangements

18. I lived off the school campus, in Edinburgh. Some staff also lived off the school campus and some lived in houses on the campus. Housemasters lived in accommodation in the boarding house. The Housemaster and Assistant Housemaster had access to the children's residential areas. Other people who had access to boarding accommodation were cleaners and workmen.

Culture within Merchiston Castle School

19. The culture within the school was supportive. We encouraged every young man to achieve his potential. The boys were happy and always pleased to see me, whether in the school or on Princes Street. The practice of fagging did not exist at the school.

Discipline and punishment

20. At the beginning of my time at Merchiston, I believe boys were still beaten. I never witnessed a boy being beaten nor did I discuss boys being beaten with a student. Otherwise, students were punished by having to write about a designated subject on blue paper. There was also Saturday night detention for some pupils. Staff supervised this and records were kept.
21. There was a formal policy in relation to discipline and punishment. All new members of staff were issued with the policy and in-service training kept them up to date. If I thought a member of staff was being too harsh, I intervened when I was aware of the problem.

22. The senior pupils in Upper VI were involved in keeping order. By "keeping order" I mean exactly that. The senior pupils kept order by being present. The Housemaster supervised them. I cannot say how the Housemaster supervised the senior pupils as I was not a Housemaster.

Day to day running of Merchiston Castle School

23. I was not really at any time involved in the day to day running of the school.
24. I am confident that, if any child was being abused or ill-treated, it would have come to light at or around the time it was occurring. All teachers care for their students and, if I thought any abuse was happening, I would have gone to the Housemaster. However, I did not go to the Housemaster with concerns about the abuse of any pupil and I am not aware of any other members of staff who did so.
25. Abuse in the school during my period of employment could have occurred and gone undetected as, in a school for boys, there were a lot of times when I would not have been involved with the boys. For instance, on the sports field. These matters would have been dealt with by the Senior Deputy Head. I would not have heard about instances of abuse because my area was the academic side.

Concerns about Merchiston Castle School

26. The school was a subject of concern following the suicide of James Rainey Brown, a former teacher and after allegations about RCQ teacher of [REDACTED]. I do not know the details of those concerns. With respect to James Rainey Brown, my information was anecdotal. With respect to RCQ [REDACTED] I knew nothing.

27. As to what extent the parents of the children were made aware of such concerns and who had responsibility for reporting to the parents, the Headmaster, Andrew Hunter, was always meticulous about sharing important information with parents.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

28. There was a complaints or reporting process in place if any child in the school, or another person on their behalf, wished to make a complaint or report a concern in that there was a Child Protection Officer. Records will have been kept which the Inquiry can access. I do not know of any complaints being made.
29. Any complaint against a member of staff was investigated thoroughly and openly. I say "openly" because I interviewed the parents and the member of staff. The student and parent, or the student, or the parent, were included in the investigation. All complaints were recorded.

Trusted adult or confidant

30. A student could contact a teacher or housemaster to speak to about any worries they had. The chaplain was also available in this capacity. Children did raise concerns in this way. I know that children did that because that was the system in place. Any concerns were confidential.

Child protection arrangements

31. Staff were given advice regularly at in-service training. Training gave advice on how children in their care at the school should be treated, cared for and protected against abuse, ill-treatment or inappropriate behaviour towards them.

32. We all knew what to do in respect of handling, and responding to, reports of abuse or ill-treatment of children by staff, other adults or fellow pupils. There was a written policy. All staff knew, through in-service training, the procedure for reporting abuse. This emphasised the requirement not to deal with it yourself but to report it to the Child Protection Officer.
33. The Child Protection Policy was in place to reduce the likelihood of abuse, ill-treatment, or inappropriate conduct by staff, or other adults, towards children at the school. The Inquiry should check the Policy and presumably has details of when it was first put into place. I thought the arrangements worked.

External monitoring

34. I was aware of inspectors or other officials visiting the school. We had many inspections during my time at the school. The Inquiry can check the details. The inspectors spoke to the children individually and in a group. Staff were not present. The inspectors spoke to me and they gave feedback.

Record-keeping

35. I was responsible for recording the academic progress of each student. My recording was thoroughly inspected by inspectors and was praised. I was not involved in record keeping about abuse. As with most schools, record-keeping improved over time.

Investigations into abuse, reports of abuse and civil claims

36. 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.

37. I was never involved in the handling of reports to, or civil claims made against, the school by former pupils concerning historical abuse.

Police investigations and criminal proceedings

38. I only became aware of police investigations into alleged abuse at the school after the suicide of James Rainey Brown. I gave a statement to the police. The Inquiry can check the police records. The school's response was to co-operate willingly with the investigation.

Convicted abusers

39. I do not know whether any person who worked at the school was convicted of the abuse of a child or children at the school.

Specific alleged abusers

40. I am told that the Inquiry has received evidence of allegations about specific staff members and others who may have been employed at Merchiston Castle School at the same time as me. At Question 24 of the questions put to me, I have been asked a number of specific questions about those staff members and others. I will attempt to answer those questions, other than questions to which the answers will be in the school records:-

Gordon Cruden

41. I knew him. The Inquiry can check details of our respective timing and roles. He was an excellent teacher. I did not witness any inappropriate behaviour. I am told Andrew Hunter, the headmaster of Merchiston from 1998 to 2018 describes me as a whistle-blower about how and why Gordon Cruden's career at Merchiston ended. It is not the

case that I was a whistle-blower regarding Gordon Cruden. I only knew about the allegations concerning him after he had left. Andrew Hunter was not yet at the school when Gordon Cruden left.

James Rainey Brown

42. I did not witness anything inappropriate. Retrospectively and anecdotally I heard allegations. I am told that the school record, in their Part D submission to the Inquiry, that I complained that James Rainey Brown punished [REDACTED] by making him sit naked on a bench in the corridor of Pringle House. That statement is wrong. Mr Rainey Brown confiscated [REDACTED] trousers because he had left them on the floor. [REDACTED] had to wait for two hours before Mr Rainey Brown gave them back to him, enabling him to get the bus home. This is what I told the police when I was interviewed following Mr Rainey Brown's death. [REDACTED] was not made to sit naked.
43. I did not hear of any allegations prior to Mr Rainey Brown's death. I had heard that, if something bad came out about him, Mr Rainey Brown had said he had the means to do something about it. That did cause me concern.

DXP [REDACTED]

44. I knew him and I did not witness anything inappropriate.

QZL [REDACTED]

45. I knew him and I did not witness anything inappropriate.

DRW

46. I knew him and I did not witness anything inappropriate.

QZA

47. I knew him and I did not witness anything inappropriate.

FQY

48. I knew him and I did not witness anything inappropriate.

RCQ

49. I knew her and I did not witness anything inappropriate.

BKO


50. I do not know him.

BRW

51. BRW died before I joined the school.

Helping the Inquiry

52. I am asked what, in my view, are the lessons that can be learned to protect children in a boarding school, now and in the future. The Inquiry's report should clarify this. As I have no details of the allegations that were made, I am not in a position to answer this question.
53. 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..........

04 November 2020

Dated.....