

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Philip MEADOWS

1. My name is Philip Meadows. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. From September 1972-July 1979 I attended Bideford Secondary School and thereafter, from October 1979-July 1983, I went to St Johns College Cambridge University where I obtained BA (Hons) Chemistry ; Cert Ed. From September 1983 – August 1987 I was a Teacher of Chemistry and Maths at Strathallan School.
3. From September 1987- August 1996 I was Head of Chemistry at Loretto School then from September 1996-August 2004 I was the Housemaster at School House, Sedburgh School. From September 2004-September 2006 I was Headmaster at Mowden Hall School and from September 2007-February 2009 I was Headmaster at Tettenhall College Junior School.
4. From April 2009-June 2017 I was Headmaster at Loretto Junior School. In September 2011 my wife Sylvia was appointed Housemistress of 6th Form Girls Boarding House and Lead School Nurse at Loretto School.

Employment with the school

5. From September 1987- August 1996 I was Head of Chemistry and at the start was on probation for one term. My line manager was Bill Parkhouse (deceased) who was Head of Science. We would liaise by way of having regular informal meetings.

6. I was the House tutor in Pinkie House (resident 1989-1991) and was also 1st XV Rugby Coach, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Coordinator and the Master in charge of skiing.
7. From 1 April 2009 until 30 June 2017 I was the Head of Loretto Junior School. My line manager was the Headmaster who I liaised with through regular formal meetings with him, the Bursar and the Vicegerent. During my eight years in that post I was appraised on two separate occasions. By way of induction and training I took part in Continual Professional Development through IAPS (Independent Association of Prep Schools) and SCIS as well as training at Loretto School.

Policy

8. As Head of Chemistry I had no responsibility for policy in relation to the care of children, although as a senior teacher, house tutor and organiser of residential trips and tours both foreign and domestic, I had significant responsibility for the care of children in residential settings. Basic risk assessments were required and written but apart from that I was left very much to run things independently.
9. I would have written basic risk assessments for any residential trips and/or sports tours that I supervised and/or organised, in addition to the generic risk assessments that any travel company might have provided. These would have included details of all staff and participants, itineraries, contact details, safety precautions and similar information. However I believe that it was after the Lyme Bay kayaking tragedy in March 1993 that the whole regulation of trips and activities in schools became the subject of much greater scrutiny.
10. As Head of the Junior School I had overall responsibility for all policies in relation to the care of children in the Junior School, staff recruitment, child protection, staff appraisal, complaints, discipline and allegations against staff.
11. All necessary policies were in place and subject to regular review. Clear records in all areas were maintained and, where appropriate, subject to review by Governors. Safety recruitment guidelines for new staff were followed rigorously.

12. All staff underwent regular CP training and according to priorities identified in their appraisals also underwent further training in key areas of need and/or interest.

Strategic planning

13. As Head of Chemistry I had no responsibility for Strategic planning.
14. As Head of the Junior School I was involved in many aspects of strategic planning for the whole (junior and senior) school. This involved Junior School Senior Management Team meetings and whole staff meetings, Senior Management Team meetings for the whole school, attendance at Governor Meetings and preparing reports and papers for both the Senior Management Team and Governor meetings.
15. Key areas of the school's strategic planning included provision of boarding in Junior School and Senior School, Finance, Staffing, Quality of education and Inspection.

Other staff

16. As Head of the Junior School I was responsible for all staff matters in the Junior School. I had 20 - 25 staff who reported directly to me, from 2/3 Deputy Heads to the grounds, kitchen and cleaning staff. The Junior School Senior Management Team operated an open door policy, organised and ran all training, dealt with any disciplinary matters, supported career progression and so were fully involved formally and informally in all aspects of staff management.

Recruitment of staff

17. I was involved in all aspects of staff recruitment in the Junior School. Clear safer recruitment policies were always followed. References, verbal and written, were always obtained. No post was confirmed until two acceptable references had been obtained and this applied to all positions.

Training of staff

18. As Head of Junior School I organised the annual training programme for Junior School staff and every year the programme included aspects of Child Protection. Other training areas revolved around the stated or perceived needs and requirements of individual or groups of staff. As Head I would observe each member of staff teaching at least once annually and this along with self-evaluation priorities informed individual training programmes.

Supervision/staff appraisal / staff evaluation

19. As Head of Junior School I was involved in all aspects of staff appraisal and self-evaluation in line with the requirements of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) regulations. I signed off all of the annual GTCS updates when due. As a whole staff we spent a considerable amount of time discussing these initiatives and finding ways to make completing the required paperwork as straightforward as possible.
20. I was not and am not registered with the GTCS; that only became a requirement for staff in Scottish Independent schools in about 2017. However all teaching staff at Loretto Junior School were GTCS registered and as Head I was responsible for monitoring and signing off their regular Professional Learning and Updates. Thus I received special dispensation from GTCS to do so in about 2016.

Living arrangements

21. From September 1987-August 1989 I had my own flat in Leith then in September 1989-August 1991 I had use of Pinkie House Tutors Flat in Loretto which was a 2 bedroom flat in Pinkie boys' boarding house that housed 50 boys aged 13-18. I moved out of there when my family arrived.
22. From September 1991-August 1996 I stayed at 8 New Street, school property adjacent to Loretto school grounds and from April 2009-August 2009 I had my own

house in the Borders. From September 2009-August 2011 I resided at Trinity House, which is school property adjacent to the Junior School in Loretto's.

23. From September 2011-July 2017 myself and my family resided at Balcarres House, which is the Resident Housemistress's accommodation.
24. In 1980's and 1990's most Loretto staff lived in school accommodation on or near the site. By 2009 most of this accommodation had been sold or converted and thus only senior or resident pastoral staff were given school accommodation. Staff lived in their own properties across Edinburgh/East Lothian.
25. Access to children's residential areas was limited to the pastoral and welfare staff.

Culture within Loretto

26. Loretto was generally a happy and busy school; predominantly boarding in the 80's and 90's. The children enjoyed school and were well catered for academically and pastorally. Senior pupils were given a good deal of responsibility and were entrusted to assist the pastoral staff in the running of the boarding Houses, but I did not see any fagging. The Junior School was, latterly, an equally happy and productive school, predominantly day pupils with very little boarding. There was no fagging.
27. During my tenure as Head of Loretto Junior School I always felt that it was a happy, busy and productive establishment. This was frequently reported to me by parents, current and prospective, visitors and even the Inspectorate. Staff were generally happy and fulfilled; pupils were motivated and working successfully. It is difficult to define exactly why but the relatively small size of the school, low pupil teacher ratio and committed staff who knew the children very well were important factors.

Discipline and punishment

28. At Loretto Senior School there would have been formal policies for the discipline and/or punishment of children although I cannot recall what they were. Discipline

would have been the responsibility of staff, senior staff, Housemasters and the Headmaster. Pupils and staff would have been kept aware through the normal channels of communication. I am not aware of how records were kept.

29. In the 1980's and 1990's senior pupils did have some responsibility for disciplining junior pupils under the supervision of the Headmaster, Housemasters and perhaps even the Head of School.
30. At Loretto Junior School children were routinely disciplined or punished by class teachers, deputy Heads or the Headmaster, as appropriate and according to clear policies and frameworks. Children and Staff were fully aware of the Positive Discipline policy and clear, comprehensive records were kept.
31. No senior pupils in the Junior School were allowed to discipline junior pupils.

Day to day running of the school

32. As Head of the Junior School I was fully involved in all aspects of the day to day running of the Junior School , as specified in my Job Description. I was responsible to the Governors and parents for the safety and security of the children whilst they were at school. I honestly believe that if any child was being abused or ill-treated, at school or at home it would have come to light.
33. All staff were well trained in CP measures. Our policies were all compliant with GIRFEC and HGIOS. Senior staff treated child welfare very seriously and it was a standing item on the agenda for all Senior Management Team meetings.
34. Also, as Head, I had excellent relations with local Police, Healthcare and Social Services so that sensitive information and concerns could be shared effectively.

Concerns about the school

35. I am not aware of the Junior School ever being the subject of concern to any external body because of the way in which children were treated. I am not aware, as far as I can remember, of any concerns by any external body about either the Junior School or the Senior School.
36. I was a member of staff at Loretto when David Stock raised complaints about bullying and the behaviour of the Headmaster. I was never a close acquaintance of David and, apart from his one bizarre outburst in the Common Room he never spoke to me in person about any of his concerns. I believe that in a discussion with one of his classes allegations might have been made about bullying by Prefects, which the Headmaster, Norman Drummond, did not address. I do not know any more than that.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

37. I do not know what systems were in place in the Senior School. In the Junior School there was a clear and transparent complaints procedure. All complaints were treated seriously and investigated thoroughly whatever their gravity. Comprehensive chronological records were kept and feedback was always given to the complainant, with advice for further actions if not satisfied. All records were regularly audited by a Governor. The Junior School received a number of complaints from the quality of food to bullying, the vast majority of which I would classify as routine school issues.

Trusted adult/confidante

38. I seem to recall that there was an "independent listener" introduced at some stage in the senior school but I cannot remember exactly when or how this initiative changed over time. I have no idea if children raised concerns through this channel. I do not recall ever having such a facility at the Junior School.

Abuse

39. Definitions of abuse were disseminated through regular Child Protection training. Over time the definitions of abuse seemed to broaden slightly but through regular updates, consistent and compulsory training and additional voluntary sessions, which were then cascaded to staff, everybody understood the term. I think there was less emphasis 30 years ago but in recent times a significant proportion of annual staff INSET revolved around the recognition of abuse in all its forms.
40. I think the accepted definitions of Child Abuse have changed slightly over the years and school staff have had to be instructed to respond in different ways, albeit with the same underlying principles, through training and the regular sharing of updated information. Even now, working at an English Independent School I have to undertake annual training to update my Child Protection awareness.

Child Protection arrangements

41. All staff received regular compulsory Child Protection (CP) training. As a Head I also received additional training through IAPS (Independent Association of Prep School) and SCIS (Scottish Council of Independent Schools). Since the 1990's both the Junior School and Senior School have had designated CP lead staff although over time their titles have changed.
42. Both organisations, IAPS in a national and even international context and SCIS in a Scottish context ,provide professional and personal support and training for Heads and staff in their member schools. I was a member of both organisations from 2009 to 2017
43. As Head I was also Designated CP coordinator for the Junior School working with Elaine Logan, who was CP coordinator in the Senior School.
44. Therefore staff received a great deal of guidance and instruction on how to handle and respond to any report of abuse, in all its defined forms. The importance of referrals, interviews, note taking and confidentiality were discussed and explained

thoroughly. Whistle blowing policies were in place and staff were instructed how to deal with any suspicions of abuse by for example management.

45. Child Protection training was delivered formally to all staff (a register should have been kept) at School at least annually. Senior management would also engage in further training, and deliver updates to staff through INSET and regular staff meetings. As Head in my weekly staff briefings and at the start and end of every term careful consideration would be given to any pupils and/or families about whom we had concerns, for any reason.
46. I never received any formal allegations about the behaviour of any staff member from another staff member, and certainly no suspicions of abuse, although all staff received adequate training to enable them to know what to do if they had any concerns, including what they should do if they had CP concerns about me, as Head.

External monitoring

47. Loretto was inspected as a whole school in 2014 and 1994/5 during my periods of service there. There may have been other visits too; I am not sure. Children were spoken to, usually in groups without staff being present. Other methods of feedback were used too including the opportunity to post anonymous comments. I was spoken to both as Head of Chemistry and Head of the Junior School, and subsequently received feedback.
48. After both Inspections I received feedback appropriate to my position at the time, Head of Chemistry or Head of the Junior School. The feedback on chemistry would have concentrated on academic matters (1993?); the Junior School feedback would have been more wide ranging but was I recall very positive, concentrating on effective learners and good professional practice (2014)

Record-keeping

49. In recent years as Head of the Junior School I tried to maintain accurate and comprehensive records although the policy on record keeping was always a little vague; it was not always absolutely clear what records should and should not be kept. Thus the quality of the records as a source of information was always variable and historically increasingly sketchy. I did not see any records relating to the abuse of children or allegations of abuse. Historic records were very variable in quality but once again there was little evidence in the records that I saw of any reports of abuse, ill treatment or inappropriate conduct.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

50. I believe that I conducted one investigation on behalf of the school into an allegation of ill-treatment of a child at the school by a member of staff. In [REDACTED] 2009/2010 [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] of the Junior School and [REDACTED] FZH [REDACTED] was alleged by a parent to have “tackled” his son in a training session too vigorously, thereby causing the boy to sustain a painful back injury. I do not recall the boy’s name. I investigated the matter according to school protocols and in consultation with the Headmaster. The Scottish [REDACTED], Social Services and Police Scotland were consulted and ultimately it was decided that the matter should not be formally reported to social work. A verbal warning was given to Mr FZH [REDACTED]
51. A verbal warning would have remained on Mr FZH [REDACTED]’s record for 2(?) years but I believe that he left the school and moved to Ireland with his new wife before the end of that period.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

52. I was never involved in the handling of any reports or claims against the school made by former pupils concerning historical abuse.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

53. I am not aware of any police investigations into alleged abuse at either school. I have never had to give any statements to the police or any evidence at any trial.

Convicted abusers

54. I do not know of any person who worked at either school who was convicted of the abuse of any child.

Alleged Abusers

BND

55. I recall BND and I believe we both worked at Loretto's between 2009 and 2016. He was in his 40's and was a and housemaster and his wife taught in the Junior School. He in the Junior School and taught there. He was a charismatic who was an enthusiastic school Master. He was a good man and I did see him with the children. He was a kind and caring man who didn't discipline the children. He certainly didn't abuse any of them and I did not hear anything to suggest he did.

QRO

56. I remember QRO and we worked at the same time at Loretto's between 2009 and 2017. He was in his 40's and was a in the Senior School. I had no role in direct relation to him though we got on well and I would say that I knew him quite well socially. I did see him with the children and I would say that he was relaxed and professional with them. He did not discipline the children and certainly did not abuse any of them. I heard nothing to suggest that he did.

CRL

57. I remember CRL and we both worked at Loretto's from about 2011 till 2017. He was in his 40's and was a teacher in the Junior School. My impression of him was that he was a good teacher whom I didn't know all that well though he did seek my advice occasionally. I did see him with the children and would just repeat that he was a good teacher for them. He did not discipline the children and certainly did not abuse any of them. I heard nothing to suggest that he did.

CRW

58. I remember CRW and we both worked at Loretto's between 1987 and, I think, 1996. He was between 40 and 50 and was SNR and a housemaster in the Junior School. I had no direct role in relation to him. I did not know him very well but my impression of him was that he was a traditional school master who was stern with high standards. I did see him with the children and I would say that he was stern with them, quite formal and a bit scary. However, he never disciplined the children and definitely did not abuse any of them. I also heard nothing to suggest that he did.

Other Information

59. 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.....

01 December 2020

Dated.....