

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**Simon Reid**

1. My name is Simon Humphrey Croghan Reid. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### **Background**

2. I studied for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. I graduated in 1984 and then undertook a Higher Diploma in Education, Post-Graduate, Secondary Education, again at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. I graduated from that course in 1985.
3. I first took up employment at Brentwood School in Essex, England as an English Teacher. This was from 1986 to 1988. I then moved to Stowe School in Buckinghamshire as an English Teacher from 1988 to 1993 before moving to Christ's Hospital in West Sussex where I was both Assistant Head of English and a Houseparent, from 1993 to 1994. Next, I moved to Worksop College in Nottinghamshire where I served as Deputy Headmaster from 2004 until 2011. I then took up the position of Principal at Gordonstoun School from 2011 to 2017 before finally returning to Christ's Hospital to serve as Head Teacher and CEO of the school from 2017 to the present day.

### **Employment with Gordonstoun School April 2011 to August 2017**

4. I was employed as Principal at Gordonstoun School from April 2011 to August 2017. In late 2009 I was approached by a head-hunter to consider applying for the position

of Principal of Gordonstoun. I applied and was appointed in early May 2010. I know that my references were taken up in support of my application. What informal processes were used for seeking endorsement of my application I do not know but I should be surprised if there was not significant research done to confirm the impressions communicated in the references provided.

5. There was a comprehensive list of requirements for the position in the published job description. The school is likely to have retained copies of this. GTCS registration was not a requirement of the job but a post-graduate teaching qualification was. As far as I was aware there was no requirement to register with the GTC but I did have a registered number. Whilst employed as Principal at the school, I registered with the General Teaching Council of Scotland, the GTCS, Reg No. [REDACTED] which has lapsed since I left Scotland in August 2017. I cannot recall if my appointment involved a probationary period. At my request I was appraised in June 2012, just over a year into the job. Professor Bryan Williams, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the School facilitated the appraisal. He deputed the matter Mr Stephen Baldock. The appraisal was done by canvassing the opinions of senior members of staff which were then collated in a report which was discussed and agreed with the member of the Board conducting the appraisal, which in turn was passed on to the Chairman of the Board of Governors. One of the members of the board was tasked with leading my first appraisal. This was followed by a second appraisal in 2014 conducted by an independent consultant brought in for the purpose, I can't remember the name of the consultant. It concluded with a report presented to Prof. Bryan Williams, the Chairman of the Board of Governors.
6. I was line-managed by the Chairman of the Board of Governors. Throughout my tenure of this position, I met with the Chairman of the Board of Governors on a monthly basis. The Principal of the school prepared termly reports to the full board, which provided opportunity for scrutiny of all normal trustee responsibly. Further scrutiny emerged in the course of my tenure of a Key Performance Indicator based structure of assessing performance. These would be agreed performance indicators discussed at Committee meetings, such as a certain percentage of pupils achieving a certain grade in specified exams.

## **Policy at Gordonstoun**

7. The detail of policies relating to the welfare of children at the school was comprehensive and subject at every stage of development to regular public scrutiny. The school had full and unannounced Care Inspections in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015, the outcomes for which can be found on the Care Inspectorate website or the school's. The most recent such inspection was carried out in the term after my departure, in November 2017. All outcomes from these five inspections were either Good, Very Good, or Excellent. To my knowledge there is nothing that has been disclosed since these examinations that might have altered the results.
8. Policies relating to the care of children were subject to regular review, change and development based on strategies fully considered by the school executive and the Board of Governors. Every member of staff, whether employed to teach or as support staff, was trained in child protection. Training was routine and part of a culture driving attitudes to and development of Child Protection. On a day-to-day basis, Child Protection monitoring and development was led by the Deputy Head of Pastoral care, and this role was supported by the school's Child Protection Officer.
9. Records for each child at Gordonstoun were kept on a secure area managed by bespoke software which allowed all staff to register concerns. Each member of staff had access to different levels of information on a need to know basis. Every entry on the pastoral care system required the author to consider whether what they were reporting was a child protection matter and, if so, the report registered immediately with the Child Protection Officer and the Deputy Head of Pastoral care and could then be escalated as required.

## **Strategic planning**

10. I was both involved in and responsible for strategic planning in relation to the school. Consideration of the potential for abuse and multi-layered action to combat its occurrence at the school was central to policy, training, and general culture. As Principal it was my responsibility to insist this was respected by all staff.

11. Strategic planning for Gordonstoun was the responsibility of the Board of Governors. This responsibility was passed to me by the Chairman of the Board. On matters relating to finance, the Finance Director had overall control and he was appointed by and reported directly to the Board of Governors. Soon after my arrival at the school, strategic planning was put in place for the immediate, medium and long term future of the Junior School at Aberlour, the main school for pupils aged between nine and thirteen years of age, and the International Summer School.
12. Strategic planning was overseen by the Board of Governors through the Development Committee chaired by a member of the governing board. This was one of three committees established to create more detailed oversight of the school's operation and future. One committee was the Finance and General Purposes committee, one was the Education committee, and thirdly the Development committee.
13. I do not recall whether by the time I left the school any single governor had responsibility for matters relating to safeguarding of pupils. At the outset and for a number of years this was regarded as a matter of such significance that no single governor should have responsibility for it, therefore committing every member of the board to being informed about and having responsibility for it. I remember believing, whilst this system was workable in the day-to-day management and governance of the school, that the statutory and compliance elements of safeguarding children needed to be concentrated in one member of the board who had experience of and expertise in child welfare. If I remember correctly, by the time I left, this change in governance was made and one person on the board had this responsibility. I can't remember her name. In any event, strategic development of safeguarding matters at the school, through the Board's Committees, was central to its operation, culture and governance.

#### **Other staff**

14. All teaching and major support staff appointments were my responsibility. Mr Hugh Brown, the Finance Director appointed administrative, finance, and grounds staff. He



followed the school-wide vetting procedures. All senior staff, such as Deputy Heads and the Finance Director were responsible to me as school principal. The Finance Director also sent a financial report directly to the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

### **Recruitment of staff**

15. I was involved in the recruitment of staff. Appointments of administrative, finance, or grounds staff were made by the Finance Director unless they were to senior positions, which I appointed. All other posts were filled through an appointment process which was deputed by me to be led by Mr Toni Gabb the Deputy Head of Staff and Planning. Generally, advertisements were placed with the Times Educational Supplement for teaching posts and in the local press for most others. The actual mechanics of the recruitment process for filling teaching or support staff posts was run by the school HR department led by the HR Manager, Ms Joan Hurlston. The HR Manager had responsibility for ensuring multi-layered compliance in recruitment. I interviewed all teachers and senior support staff and at all interviews, I was accompanied by at least one other member of staff, which included the HR Manager.
16. In my time as principal at Gordonstoun, no appointment was made without obtaining references. The process included obligatory completion of the school's own questionnaire which included identifying detail, addresses, qualifications, professional training and scrutiny of any appointee's suitability to work with children. It also required detailed employment histories, structured to identify gaps in employment; questions about fitness to work with children and, a question about extremism.
17. Not all referees were actually spoken to. They were spoken to for senior positions, or when detail in a reference or from interview made this advisable or necessary.
18. At interview, one section of the interview was devoted to assessing each candidate's experience of and training in child protection, including teachers' management of

disclosures. By the time of completion of my tenure as Headmaster the Scottish Education Department had made GTCS registration mandatory, but at the beginning of my tenure it was not.

### **Training of staff**

19. The school was a member of the Scottish Council for Independent Schools and there were various courses attended, financed by the school, which were aimed at Head Teachers starting in post. In the course of my being in post at the school, I joined the Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference and attended this organisation's First Headship course. The school was and still is a member of the Boarding School Association. The Boarding School Association did not carry out any inspections of Gordonstoun. It wasn't an inspecting organisation.
20. As Principal it was my responsibility to ensure that there was a strategy, plan and action for delivering school inset. Inset refers to School based in service training. I did not personally deliver training in this programme, it was left to professionals from outside the school or staff members who had the relevant training and expertise. Responsibility for the inset programme was deputed by me to the Deputy Head of Staffing and Planning. There would have been written agreed plans for the inset program and written notes on the quality of what had been done during school inset and these plans, notes, and all other paperwork pertaining thereto would have been kept by him or his secretary in his office.

### **Supervision / staff appraisal / staff evaluation**

21. I was involved in the supervision of staff, the training of staff, and appraisals or evaluations of staff. The school appraisal system was structured to ensure that all appraisals for teaching members of staff were signed off by me and that this included an interview with me as the last stage of the process. Appraisals for most support staff were signed off by the Director of Finance. Some support staff, whom I line-managed directly, came under my appraisal umbrella. Responsibility for the

appraisal programme was deputised by me to the Deputy Head of Staffing and Planning.

22. The appraisal system was based on a regularly reviewed and strategically-based policy which, in my second year, was changed to include its more direct oversight by me as Principal. A new Headmaster or Principal coming in would be likely to make changes and these were the types of changes I made. There was no specific incident which led to this change. It was used both for staff career development and to ensure standards in delivering the academic, boarding and broader curriculum. It was also a way in which to gauge the standards of staff members in terms of their engagement with, adherence and cultural commitment to the appropriate safeguarding guidelines and practices. In the course of the appraisal and the questions raised at appraisal there was an opportunity to assess an individual's commitment to and understanding of safeguarding practices and culture.
23. More general supervision of staff was led by me and there was shared staff management on a day-to-day basis by the Deputy Head of Curriculum and the Deputy Head of Staffing and Planning.

### **Living arrangements**

24. I lived in discrete family accommodation onsite provided for the Principal to support the needs of the role.
25. About 75% of the staff lived offsite. Those who had pastoral roles were provided with accommodation onsite. Each boarding house included attached but discrete accommodation for the House Parents. In most houses, there was accommodation for an Assistant House Parent, too.
26. House Parents, Assistant House Parents, Matrons, and any house tutor on duty had access to the children's residential areas. They would have access until approximately 11.00 p.m. each evening. House parents or Assistant House parents, depending on who was on duty, would have access to the residential areas after

11.00 p.m. as they would require access in the event of an emergency. Parents of members of house had access to their children's rooms at the beginning and end of term or half term.

### **Culture within Gordonstoun**

27. During my time as Principal I would say that the culture at Gordonstoun was enlightened, caring, anti-hierarchical, kind, and clearly defined. The school's mission was influenced strongly by its founder, Kurt Hahn and his thinking was key to understanding Gordonstoun's culture. Far from the impressions created by decades of sloppy media coverage about life for students at the school, a Gordonstoun education struck an extraordinary balance between encouraging care and developing resilience. To achieve this, it provided a diverse range of academic and physical challenges. It committed children to genuine service, locally or further afield. Children were encouraged to see with international openness, and they were allowed to develop unlimited expeditionary zeal in the Moray mountains and seas adjacent to the school. These were the underpinnings of Gordonstoun's vision for its pupils' education and all was delivered within a framework of strong pastoral care, compassion and sensitivity.
28. Regarding the behavioural culture at Gordonstoun, the school was subject to all the challenging whims of adolescent behaviour and these were managed through policies, practices and attitudes that encouraged civility and discernment.
29. When I first arrived at Gordonstoun, I believe there was an attitude to alcohol in senior pupils that needed significant adjustment. The attitude was less managed than I thought was appropriate. Change was managed both firmly and swiftly, but in a way which fostered responsibility and discernment. Of course there was push-back, some of it strong, but the cultural message of easily accessed or used alcohol was recognised as educationally flawed and, through good process, the culture changed very much for the better. There was a Sixth Form bar which was open twice a week. I think it was Thursday and Saturday. It was more carefully monitored and managed by staff.

30. Fagging did not exist at Gordonstoun, as far as I was aware. If any was discovered it would have been treated as serious and records would have been kept of it. I acknowledge that despite the cultural, structural policy and disciplinary barriers put in place to prevent it, there could have been incidences of it. Any tradition there may have been had long since disappeared and, certainly, its first Headmaster, on which much of the school subsequent activity and ethos was founded, would not have supported service in this sense. However community service was and is still central to what the school is about.

### **Discipline and punishment**

31. Ultimately, the Principal had responsibility for behaviour at Gordonstoun. However, the culture in the School was one that actively and explicitly rejected any distinction being made between pastoral care, behavioural guidance and what this question defines as discipline and punishment. In this respect, everyone had responsibility for how pupils behaved and how they treated others. All teaching and pastoral staff were engaged in monitoring and supporting behaviour which led to others' happiness. Breaches of this, depending on their gravity, were managed by individual staff members, tutors, House Parents, the Deputy Heads, specifically the Deputy Head Pastoral, and if necessary the Principal. Parents were involved as soon as possible or appropriate.
32. There was a formal policy in relation to discipline and punishment. For pupils, there was a code for acceptable conduct. Pupils were given a copy of the code for acceptable conduct and its terms referred to the formal policy. It was couched in encouraging, supportive terms defining mostly what was acceptable in general principles and pupils were expected to manage their behaviour in terms of logical lines which flowed from these. The consequences of repeated, poor behaviour in certain areas were spelt out clearly and were widely understood and supported. There were stated policies on bullying, alcohol, drugs, and sexual activity.

33. For staff, there was a code of conduct which was part of the contract signed at appointment and this included clear boundaries for behaviour. A significant part of this stipulated acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to pupils. Staff were made aware of areas of particular vulnerability for residential staff in a boarding school.
34. The staff and pupils were made aware of the policy on discipline and punishment. There was multi-layered reinforcement of the school's behavioural culture. There were weekly meetings of the senior leadership team. The senior leadership team was a group of four or five people including the Principal, three Deputies and the Director of Finance. They met to set out the parameters for pastoral care, from which Behaviour Policy stemmed. A weekly meeting of house parents carried behavioural messages to pupils in houses and, through weekly meetings with all teaching staff, policy standards were set. Each day the entire school met in the Chapel and in this context policies were explored, presented, and communicated. The unique curriculum for PHSE (Personal Health and Social Education) at the school was a further layer for supporting the school's behavioural codes. The system created for staff to record pupil pastoral concerns and behaviour was very efficient and meant that behavioural policy and practice were not easily divided.
35. For staff, the inset, termly, and weekly staff meetings provided regular opportunities for policy to be communicated. Staff files provided a system for ensuring that behaviour could be recorded safely.
36. Senior pupils were responsible for very little of the day to day discipline of school. There was a system of prefects or monitors who were called Colour Bearers. This system was supervised by the Principal and the Deputy Head of Pastoral Care.
37. Gordonstoun acted upon its belief that young people needed to be trusted with being able to offer genuine help where it was needed in society. For example, pupils trained pupils in its Fire Service, its Mountain Rescue section and its Ski Patrol section. These areas of the curriculum provided unusual contexts in which young people learnt independence, responsibility, and the risks associated with genuinely taking charge and part of this meant learning from mistakes. Managing mistakes or

fault was central to understanding Gordonstoun's willingness to allow pupils to take responsibility for pupils. Pupils in these contexts had responsibility for other pupils' discipline. However, in the sense that swathes of school operation were allowed to be run by senior pupils without boundary, this did not happen.

### **Day to day running of the school**

38. I was involved in the day to day running of the school. As Principal everything was run by me. However, much of the day-to-day operation of the school was deputed to three Deputy Heads. They were in charge of Staffing and Planning, Pastoral Care, and the Curriculum. There was also a Finance Director, who in turn deputed work to others. There were Heads of Teaching Departments, an Outdoor Education Director, the Grounds staff and catering manager, to name a few. Everyone was line-managed.
39. There were many times when as Principal of a relatively small school, I could be involved in the nitty-gritty of school operation. At others, I was relatively detached and involved in strategic development, meeting parents away from school, speaking at events to raise money held away from the School and overseas.
40. Looking back, 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.
41. The school had in place every check and balance possible to ensure commitment to the GIRFEC framework of care. GIRFEC stand for Getting It Right For Every Child, which was part of Government policy at the time.
42. Firstly, policies were in place to guide the behaviour of staff and pupils and these were regularly updated to ensure compliance and relevance.
43. Secondly, everyone was informed or reminded of boundaries and the combination of safeguarding inset, which was anchored by knowledge and reminders of the Shanarri wheel core principles, and regular communication across the school formed

these boundaries. To support GIRFEC was a set of obligations to make sure every child was Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included (hence, 'shanarri').

44. Thirdly, part of the structure which shaped behavioural boundaries drove understanding of the central role that disclosure played. Pupils knew of their right and responsibility to disclose any behaviour believed to be questionable.
45. Staff knew they had parallel rights and responsibilities to disclose behaviour which crossed boundaries. Staff were fully aware of their responsibility to report disclosures from pupils or staff to their managers and ultimately, the Principal. Allegations about senior staff, including the Principal, had stated, policy-driven channels for being disclosed and reported. It was a written part of the staff manual.
46. The school and its staff fostered a culture of openness and transparency and one in which disclosure and reporting were embedded.
47. The named person and lead professional structure which was adopted in the course of my headship became core elements contributing to the culture of openness and to professional support for GIRFEC.
48. There can be no complacency about protection of children and the best possible systems and culture cannot protect children from threat 100% of the time. However, the school had in place all the statutory, procedural and cultural barriers to combat abuse and ill-treatment.

#### **Reporting of complaints / concerns**

49. There was a complaints procedure in place at the school. The school's complaints procedure was part of the contractual mechanism for a child's admission to the school. This procedure was posted on the school's website. The pupils' right to complain was stated, with other policy documents, in the termly calendar published to all pupils and parents. The openness of the school to receive communication and



complaints from parents was common-knowledge and complaints that were more than slight, or persisted, were referred to the Principal, where they were recorded.

50. Notwithstanding the openness and clear public statement of commitment to complaint process, some complaints came straight to the principal and bypassed the school's complaints procedure. I took this as a sign of health: regardless of process, the complaint was heard.
51. Any documents carrying complaints or any communication between school staff and pupils or parents were uploaded to the school's pupil record platform. Complaints that were grave in nature or were presented persistently were recorded in the principal's office.

#### **Trusted adult or Confidante**

52. The person in the school that a child could speak to about any worries they had was the School Chaplain. There was also a Designated Person with Responsibility for Safeguarding. This was an independent listener appointed by but not paid by the school. Beyond the School there were several child protection agencies that were publicized in boarding house and referred to by staff in pupils' lessons, especially PHSE. Children did raise concerns through these means. I don't know about the frequency at which such matters were raised, as I would only hear about the most serious situations. Most matters would stay between the child and the Designated Person with Responsibility who made a professional judgement about whether or not the matter required to be passed on for independent or professional scrutiny.

#### **Abuse**

53. During my period of employment, the school did have a definition of abuse that it applied in relation to the treatment of children at the school. The definition of abuse, as with all terms adopted for child protection and safeguarding at the school, flowed from GIRFEC principles and practice. My memory of the detail here may be faulty

but, essentially, the school's action on abuse flowed from watching out for children being neglected, showing signs of physical, sexual and or emotional abuse. Clarification of these terms was provided by the NSPCC and formed part of the landscape in which policy and practice at the school evolved. Alongside this were the wellbeing indicators provided by the core terms of Shanarri. The school's definition of abuse was tested, as mentioned above, in several unannounced Care Inspections which resulted in strong policy and practice endorsement.

54. The definition of abuse was communicated and explained to staff formally. There was an annual, compulsory inset at which registers of attendance were kept and were inspected. These in-service training sessions were led by the school's Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Head Pastoral but included training delivered by outside specialists. GIRFEC and Shanarri principles were the starting point for everything the school did in terms of this training.
55. Informally the Safeguarding Lead, pastoral staff, and generally house parents were the conduits for ensuring strong awareness of abuse and its signs as clarified in the school policy. All staff were expected to be aware of abuse when it was suspected and reporting and disclosure was in the fabric of the school.
56. The definition of abuse was part of the culture of the school when I became principal at the school in 2011 but gathered momentum with the appointment of an exceptionally energetic and powerful advocate of children's wellbeing just before my arrival, Mrs Diana Monteith, Deputy Head Pastoral. It was subject to constant review and change in accordance with adjustments in the Scottish legislative landscape. Within the school, adaptation was a constant theme to ensure that legislation could be appropriately applied, without threat, to the particular context of the school.

### **Reports of abuse**

57. During my seven years as Principal there were a number of incidents concerning the way children were treated at the school which were reported to the school's Designated Person with Responsibility for Safeguarding and then passed on to

external agencies, including the police. My memory of detail may be sketchy and the school itself will have records of these cases.

58. One involved an allegation by a 16 year-old girl that she had been sexually abused by a boy of her age, possibly a year younger. This was reported to the police and children's services. The case was passed on to the Procurator Fiscal. I do not know whether any judgement emerged from the PF. The case was not acted upon at the school because it was subject to external legal process; both young people left the school soon after the beginning of the subsequent term because the girl's parents believed that she was unsafe at the school with the boy still there and the boy was withdrawn from the school by his parents because of the perceived impact on him of others' response to what it was alleged he had done. The matter left bitterness in every corner because, with the PF not reaching any conclusion about the case, the matter was left hanging. As far as possible what we did was to ensure that there was almost no possibility of the two young people coming into contact with one another. That included a change of timetable for one of them. I think it was the boy's timetable that was changed but it was done in a way that didn't stand out as a discriminatory step. These changes were managed so that they appeared to blend with the structural adjustments made at the beginning of any school year. As far as possible there was no preference made by the school towards either of the pupils. The school did everything it could to protect the safety of both young people.
59. Another case involved the school asking two 16 year-olds to leave the school having been found to be having sex. This cut notably across the school code of conduct. The girl's mother challenged the school's decision on the basis that because of diminished responsibility she could not take responsibility for decisions of the sort requiring sexual restraint. The girl had a diagnosis of ADHD. The matter was tested by the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service in a case that alleged discrimination. The outcome was that the school's position was vindicated, the complainant was not successful.
60. There were two further cases of alleged sexual abuse, one involving pupils in holiday time, away from the school, which was reported to and investigated by the police. The other was disclosed to the school sometime after the event and was alleged to

have happened in term-time, in one of its boarding houses. If I recall correctly, both cases were dropped by the police because charges were not brought by the alleged victim in each case. The school's response in both cases was to ensure support for the mental health and wellbeing of the alleged victims, including the offer of counselling. All steps that we could reasonably take to manage the case, were taken.

61. Finally, another parent alleged discrimination in the school's management of her daughter's sight disability. This matter rolled on for three years and there were various crises brought on by the parents response to their daughter's difficulties. The resulting tensions between her and her mother, including an allegation of physical abuse by the girl against her mother, resulted in the social services and police being referred to. As far as I am aware, this matter never reached a tribunal.
62. Parents in all the above cases were aware of the incidents from the beginning. However, in the cases where the police investigated the alleged perpetrator of sexual abuse, the school was asked by the alleged victim not to communicate with their parents before initial police interviews and investigations had been conducted.
63. Non-recent case: centred on an allegation of rape at Aberlour House which is Gordonstoun's feeder prep school. This took place in about 1989, possibly 1990 when Aberlour House was situated in Aberlour, not where it is today on the Gordonstoun campus. This case involved an alleged rape of a pupil in her final year of the prep school by a young member of staff engaged by the school as a gap student. I don't know the name of the member of staff. Aberlour House and Gordonstoun, though separate in terms of governance were closely linked in ethos and origin. The response from me and Gordonstoun when the allegation came to light in 2013 or 2014, was to report it to the police. The GTCS would not have been involved in the matter. This matter, too, became the focus of a claim and came to court. I believe it was unsuccessful because of a lack of any corroborative detail. This attracted considerable press interest.

## **Child protection arrangements**

64. As indicated above, how children should be treated was at the heart of the school's culture. It was the start and end point for the school's reason for being and took shape in the staffing structure, policies, practice and routines of everything the school did. Child protection from abuse and ill-treatment was embedded in the spirit and legal framework in which the school was led and operated, from senior leaders to new teachers or maintenance staff. There were clear guidelines for understanding and supporting children's happiness in every layer of the school, including all pupils, residential staff, peripatetic music teachers, temporary workers, parents, family members and their guests, and school visitors. These guidelines were followed.
  
65. Staff were given guidance and instruction on how to handle and respond to reports of abuse or ill-treatment of children by staff, other adults, and fellow pupils. This was stipulated in routines of training about disclosure and reporting. There were clearly stated and simple structures for disclosure of concerns that covered every layer of the school's structure, including me as Principal. Pupils were made aware of reporting structures and, more importantly, the culture of the school encouraged openness and transparency and staff at the school, led by me and other senior staff, used all avenues for communication to ensure as far as possible that responsibility for reporting and disclosure lay with everyone.
  
66. It was widely understood that matters reported or disclosed to staff would be passed on to the appropriate and appointed professional who would either advise about next steps or take the matter over. In this sense, members of staff and pupils' autonomy was invariably circumscribed by over-arching requirements to protect children. Serious child protection disclosures were passed on by the school's safeguarding lead, or deputy head, or me as Principal to government agencies outside the school: social services and the police. The school's child-protection officer enjoyed strong professional relations with the local public safeguarding agencies, such as social services and the police, and this meant that border-line cases could be tested for their gravity and, if necessary, passed on.

67. Multi-layered and comprehensive arrangements were embedded in the culture of the school to reduce the likelihood of abuse or ill treatment by others. They worked as well as humanely possible. I led the school on the basis that as many structural, cultural and behavioural barriers as possible needed to separate children from potential abuse. There was no tolerance for complaisance in the school. However, even vigilant attention to ensuring the robustness of these barriers cannot guarantee freedom from threats to children's safety and happiness. So, my belief that these arrangements worked recognises fully the ongoing threats for children as they grow up. Strong barriers and vigilance are everything in managing children's happiness. Schools cannot remove all exposure to risk. Challenge and the risks posed by them, is an integral part of the educative process, particularly for adolescents.

### **External monitoring**

68. I was fully aware of external inspectors and other officials visiting the school. The Care Inspectorate visited the school for full inspections in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015. These were unannounced inspections but this did not mean that I was not fully aware of the inspection-taking place and there was daily contact with the inspection teams. The Inspectors would announce that they were arriving at the school perhaps an hour or two before they arrived.
69. In order to gain membership of the Headmasters and Headmistresses' Conference, which was successfully applied for in 2016 a full pastoral and curriculum inspection was conducted over three days at the school.
70. These types of inspection involved the inspectors talking to the children both individually and in groups. Staff were not present during the interviews of pupils. The inspectors spoke to me about their findings afterwards and gave feedback.

## **Record-keeping**

71. In 2011 when I arrived at the school as Principal, clerical staff were just beginning the process of converting and storing all pupil files in electronic form. This was a significant administrative task and, for much of that period, pupil records were stored as paper-files in the Principal's offices. Staff files were paper-based and stored in the office of the Deputy Head of Staffing and Planning. Senior staff files were stored in the Principal's office. Each house parent also kept pupil files for matters pertinent to the daily lives of pupils in house.
72. As storage of files became electronic single files for each pupil were created and accessed by staff on a system of centrally controlled permissions. These files contained all information about each child and as records were made, they became part of the record for understanding and responding to each pupil's need.
73. I do not recall whether there was a written policy for record-keeping but given the widely used system for recording and keeping records, I suspect there was.
74. When I arrived at the school, record-keeping was in a state of some flux. However, by the time of my departure and for three or four years before that, an electronic system was the base for storing pupil files and to each child's electronic file was added daily information. These were records provided by teachers, house parents and other welfare staff. This system was robust and secure, but it was at a development stage and the school's IT staff were making constant adjustments to improve it.
75. I do not recall the policy dictating how long records were kept but the statutory guidance will have been the standard kept.
76. The filing that I inherited and used carried all the information needed for understanding the needs of pupils. They were increasingly comprehensive and general practice, after any meeting with a child, was to make a record of the meeting for her or his file.

### **Investigations into abuse – personal involvement**

77. I was involved in investigations that took place at the school, those detailed in paragraphs 57 to 62 above. There were numerous relatively minor cases of intimidation and bullying which were managed within the school's behavioural and disciplinary framework but, as far as I can recall, none in which pupils were ill-treated by staff. School records may reveal that I have not remembered any such case.
78. I was made aware by my predecessor, Mr Mark Pyper, of one member of staff, Mr QWP who had accessed pornographic material before my time at the school. I can't recall the nature of the pornographic material. There were written records about this matter regarding his accessing inappropriate materials online. This matter had been managed through a formal disciplinary process by my predecessor, he had been informed that he would not be appointed to any future residential pastoral role, and he was given a formal misconduct warning. He remained at the school. As the new principal in 2011, I considered whether to re-open the matter but given the length of time that had passed since the incident, the disciplinary response, and the fact that the warning had been heeded, I decided to allow this staff member knowledge that I knew about the matter and not initiate a process leading to his dismissal. I issued an ongoing warning and took no further action. There has been no comparable incident since then as far as I am aware. I don't recall but I think it would have been reported by me or someone I deputed, to the Scottish equivalent of the Local Designated Officer for Safeguarding.

### **Reports of abuse and civil claims**

79. I have been involved in the handling of reports and civil claims made against the school by former pupils concerning historical abuse.
80. Gordonstoun was the focus of a number of reports and claims concerning alleged non-recent abuse made by former pupils. From 2012 onwards resources were channelled into responding to these historic allegations. Some of these matters I remember only loosely. The most recent involved a mathematics teacher, Andrew



Keir, appointed near the end of my predecessor's tenure as Principal, approximately 2010.

81. Andrew Keir was going to be appointed as one of the residential tutors in Duffus House which is a boys' boarding house. My predecessor received comments or reports from other colleagues that Andrew Keir was not best appointed as residential tutor in a boys' house. I don't know the name of the colleagues but what was conveyed were questions about the appropriateness of this member staff having added boarding responsibility. As a result my predecessor reversed the appointment. Subsequently, the teacher was asked to leave the school because the police responded to allegations that the teacher's electronic equipment carried material that could be the focus of a criminal investigation. I do not have any more information about the matter. I do not recall the origin of the allegation. I believe the man was arrested, tried and convicted.
82. A second case was the allegation of rape at Aberlour House in about 1989, possibly 1990. This matter came to court. I believe it was unsuccessful because of a lack of any corroborative detail.
83. In the period 2013 to 2015 numerous rumours and allegations of historic or non-recent incidents of abuse at Gordonstoun were picked up. Deputed by the Governors to do so, I led the School's response to these allegations. There was no internal opposition to the approach taken, as far as I am aware. The school's response was to make the police aware of the allegations, communicate if possible with the alleged victims or survivors to advise them to engage with the police and, when appropriate, to offer counselling, support and reassurance that the modern school was very different from the one they experienced, one that put child protection at the centre of all it did. In this period, considerable resources were channelled into managing the school's response to historic abuse allegations. The police and the school will have records of this.
84. In light of reports of abuse such as the ones described above in paragraphs 57 to 63, regardless of the outcome of the legal process to prove allegations, the school was

minded to believe that many of the allegations of abuse made by former pupils were partly or entirely true. The type and number of allegations informed this belief.

### **Police investigations/ criminal proceedings**


85. I became aware of police investigations into alleged abuse at Gordonstoun. Most of this had to do with the non-recent abuse cases, as well as those that occurred during my time at the school, that are detailed in paragraphs 57 to 63.
86. I have not given a statement to the police or Procurator Fiscal service. In paragraph 60 above there is detail of allegations made about decisions taken by the school that were challenged at a tribunal on the basis of equality legislation and discrimination. I did give a formal statement in those tribunal proceedings. I don't recall what type of tribunal it was. The tribunal found in favour of the school. The child's mother appealed this decision and whoever tested the tribunal's findings, found in favour of the tribunal and therefore the school.
87. I have not given evidence in any criminal trial concerning alleged abuse of children attending Gordonstoun. However, I appeared as a witness in the tribunal referred to in paragraph 59 above.

### **Convicted abusers**

88. Andrew Keir the former Mathematics teacher was convicted soon after he was asked to leave the school by my predecessor, Mark Pyper. Andrew Keir was a teacher before my time at Gordonstoun so I never met him and I cannot comment on him at all. I do not know anything about his recruitment, qualifications, training, or supervision. I do not know if the school was aware of any previous allegations of abuse or even if there were any previous allegations of abuse.

## Helping the Inquiry

89. The lessons to be learned to protect children in a boarding school now and in the future are to ensure robust adherence to the legal frameworks, vigilance, and transparency across the school. Children feel intensely isolated if the adults they encounter at school do not advocate for them. This is everything in nurturing and protecting children's happiness. There must be a cross-school culture in which children know they will be believed when they speak up. This is not easily developed and relies on fragile balances. At a boarding school it is particularly important because, notwithstanding multi-layered facilities for communication, the most vulnerable children will feel exposed. And finally, that the recruitment of staff is vital and must be properly resourced to ensure that the best advocates for children are the ones who end up teaching them.
90. 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.....06 December 2020.....