

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KMK

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is KMK. My date of birth is 1942. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

Qualifications & employment history

2. I arrived at Aberdour at 4:20pm on 16 September 1961. I was twenty years old. I had already been a Salesian for three years. I had done philosophy studies for three years and 'A' Levels. Before that I did my secondary education in a Salesian college and one year as a Salesian novice. (These are all technical terms and I don't think they really matter.) During that time, I did a basic course in education and Salesian studies.
3. I stayed at Aberdour for two years. (We always referred to St John Bosco's school as "Aberdour".) I was then moved to our college near Macclesfield so that I could have further experience. I returned to Aberdour five months later because I was no longer needed at the college. I thereafter did my Theological studies in Italy but returned to Aberdour every summer to give them a hand. We did four years of theological studies before becoming a priest and after those various other studies. I got my theology degree in Italy and thereafter did a teacher training course in England for a year as a mature student, which gave me a certificate that wasn't valid in Scotland. I returned to Aberdour fifty-three years ago and I stayed for eleven years.

4. During my time there I picked up a remedial education certificate, I did a BA with the Open University and finally managed to get my GTC registration. I left Aberdour in 1981, forty-two years ago, at the age of forty.

St John Bosco's school, Aberdour

5. When I went to Aberdour I was a young Brother, twenty years old. That was my first experience of going into any work situation. I was greatly helped by the Salesians that were there.
6. The school was in a location to dream of. It was situated in the grounds of Hillside House, Aberdour, slightly above the village overlooking the sea. When I first arrived the mist was down for two days. When I got up on the third day and opened my curtains I couldn't believe it. I was looking over the Firth of Forth, Inchcolm Island, over to Edinburgh on a beautiful autumn morning. I thought I'd arrived in heaven.
7. When I first arrived, the school consisted of wooden huts that had been used by the army. There was a long line of these huts then this old Georgian mansion, Hillside House. Everything in the school took place in the huts, except sleeping over at the house at night. The kids slept there then came down to the huts in the morning.
8. When I first went to Aberdour it was a school for thirty-five boys and there were four members of staff. That was four staff from morning till night. When I came back after being ordained as a priest the school was for fifty boys in a purpose built building with new facilities and twenty-one members of staff. So, there had obviously been a lot of progress.
9. When I first went there, there was the head of the school, there might have been a deputy, but there was certainly another senior priest. There was [REDACTED] the rector of the Community. When I speak of the rector I'm not talking about SNR [REDACTED]. The rector is the head of the religious community. He didn't necessarily work in the school

and he was changed every three or six years. There was also a couple of older, retired Salesians.

10. Later on, when I came back to the new school there was a headmaster, two deputies, one for education and one for social work, and two seniors, again one for education and one for social work. At that stage there were Salesians and lay staff, both men and women. The whole place had developed into a modern school. As things developed there were a lot more lay staff and only a few Salesians there.
11. I am quoting from a leaflet I have and have given to the Inquiry, "The present buildings consist of a main block completed in 1970, housing classrooms, art and technical facilities, recreation rooms and two units for the accommodation of the children. A sports hall was added in 1973, a fantastic play barn along with a general purpose TV and assembly room. In 1979 the administration block was completed". So the whole physical layout was beautifully done and very modern.

Purpose in relation to children

12. The institution, or the place, whatever you want to call it, started as a children's home for the first ten years. Then it was requested by the Scottish Education Department that it become a List D school, an approved school it was called in those days. This happened in 1960 and then they needed to upgrade the facilities, which was done, and completed in 1979. The final piece was the administration block.

First day

13. My first impression was blank because I didn't know what to expect. I shocked the priest that met me by saying, "Well, what have we got here then?" He looked at me and probably thought, 'This fellow is going to be a lot of use!' I got introduced to the boys and then they were going swimming. They went every Monday to the naval baths in Rosyth. I asked if I had to go because I couldn't swim. I was told I didn't have to go that week but I had to from then on, so I had to teach myself to swim.

Culture

14. The Salesian approach had always been a family, relaxed, friendly approach as much as possible. Don Bosco believed kids had to feel that you loved them if you wanted to do any good at all. He wasn't starry eyed and he knew that some kids were more than troublesome, but by and large we worked on the friendly, warm approach. We tried to get the kids to come to realise that we were on their side and run it more like a children's home than an approved school, never forgetting of course that they didn't want to be there. Some of them grew to like it but they never asked to be there.

Attitude of staff towards the children

15. Don Bosco called it the preventive system, which sounds bad, but what he meant is to try and anticipate the problems, be there first, get in before it gets too bad. Basically be on the kid's side. I think the staff created that atmosphere. I think the atmosphere between the staff and children was good 99% of the time. There would be a little crisis now and again. But I think it was a happy school and a good school.
16. When it came to the threat to close the school I think the social work services were surprised by the number of letters they got in protest. We got tremendous support.

My time at St John Bosco's, Aberdour

Positions held

17. All Salesians were told where they were going. After the philosophy studies I taught English to Italian Salesians over the summer. I was then given a brown envelope telling me where I was going. As I said, I began as a 'starter'. When I returned to Aberdour in 1971, after a couple of years, I would say I just drifted into a management position.

Supervision

18. One of the experiments the school tried was to let the kids in the best group go out unsupervised. I pulled that in a bit. I wasn't happy with that, I thought it was too loose. But I wouldn't see myself as a trailblazer.

Training

19. I did some in-service training but I can't remember exactly what that was. I think it might have been only when I was ordained. I remember going to Middleton Hall for something. I can't remember what it was, I think it may have been List D in-service training. Then myself and one of the teachers applied for the Hamilton Remedial Education course. That was very useful. The person in charge of that came out and had a look at what we were doing at the school. We had to attend two summer schools. We then did the Open University course. That suited the timetable.

Structure

20. As a young Salesian I had to go and see the rector once a month. All Salesians are supposed to see their rector once a month, but young ones especially. The seniors would meet to discuss the young Salesians about three times a year and write a report for the Provincial. These reports would be communicated to me. They would want to know how you were getting on as a religious person, that's always been the centre of our lives, relationship with the Lord and all that, but also how you were getting on with the kids. It was only a small community, so we did a lot of that informally.

Staff

21. When I went to Aberdour there were only four members of staff. The guy next to me was Brother LMW. He would advise me of the best way to do things. After a short while we took on a gardening instructor. He was probably the first lay member of staff. There was a beautiful walled garden, not in the best condition but kids could do a couple of periods of gardening. LMW himself was a woodwork instructor.

22. It was a pretty ordinary school day most of the time, morning and afternoon. In the evening, very early on, they would have a period of what we called study. That was soon changed and became activities. Study wasn't really appropriate for those kids.
23. When I returned in 1971, we had the new school, there were fifty kids and we got some residential social workers. I can't remember the exact numbers. We had two dormitories that became two family units. Things like that developed with the addition of staff. There was no rapid movement of staff, it was more adding to staff and not a lot of changing of staff, so traditions were built on that. We did not have any real turnover of staff.

Personal Influence

Compliance with regulations as SNR

24. It's very hard to say whether I influenced the compliance of regulations in my role because it was a living tradition that we lived in and we absorbed together and passed on together. It really was a close knit staff.

Influence on how staff cared for children

25. A lot of how staff cared for children was done by tradition but also through the two deputies, especially the deputy social worker. Kids were allocated a residential social worker. I think there were four groups, each with their own social worker. Above them was the deputy. These were people who came back with social work qualifications and more modern ideas than the school probably had before. The dormitories would turn into living units, breakfasts began to be taken up to the living units rather than down in the dining room. A television appeared in the living unit. All that sort of thing came from the staff who joined us with their training and new ideas.

26. We had regular staff meetings and the education team and social work team had their own meetings. Case conferences were a great source of sharing information and ideas. A boy might benefit from a different form of treatment, another might be ready to go out to day school, things like that. Senior staff met every morning to see what was going on, so it was just a continual sharing of ideas.

Child protection

27. As Salesians, child protection has always been one of our strong points. Don Bosco worked with young boys and young men, but as I said, he wasn't starry eyed. So built into our system was the care of children, but care for yourself as well, not to get yourself into compromising situations. Right from our earliest experiences we were told things like never to be alone with a child, even for a good reason. As far as possible, doors should have glass panels in them. So Don Bosco was really ahead of the game in terms of child protection. It wasn't the same big red light as it is today, but I think we were all aware that we had to be careful for the kids and for yourself. At one stage I was in charge of the showers and I never stayed in them with the last boy. I always went upstairs with the penultimate boy. It was automatic that you didn't put yourself in that situation.
28. Occasionally a boy might get a smack from a member of staff and then you would have to find out why, what went wrong?. That's when the boy's group leader would be an important figure as was the deputy social work. But these were rare occasions and we would try to find out what had gone wrong. When saying a boy might get a smack, for me there were two kinds. In the very early days, when the boys were up in the big house, somebody might get a smack with a slipper for playing around in the middle of the night. The other kind wasn't so much corporal punishment, as somebody losing his cool and maybe giving a kid a slap. Then you would have to find out why and speak to the staff member concerned, etc, because they could be exasperating kids. If they were hit with a slipper it would be on the backside on top of clothing. These were rare incidents when the wheels didn't run smoothly.

Changes to regime

29. I didn't see myself as a trailblazer, I saw myself as carrying on the good tradition and letting it develop. Not only were the kids in their own groups, but they were also in tiers for behaviour. Some people thought the top group should be able to go out unsupervised but I pulled that back a bit. Some kids went to school outside, maybe they couldn't go home but they would benefit from proper education. Most of our education was remedial. There was no syllabus. So if a kid was able to cope with normal education and was well behaved they might go to a school in Dunfermline. One or two boys went out to do work experience. If they were staying with us a while they would maybe get to do this. Sometimes it worked well and on other occasions it all fell apart. We learned and they learned.

Most notable achievement

30. I was really proud, we had a great team and we all worked really well. The Secretary of State wanted to close the school. We believed in what we were doing so I told the management team that I was going to step back a bit from the school and go all out with a campaign to save it. We corrected the Secretary of State's position paper because it had mistakes in it. We sent out a letter to anybody who had visited the school and asked if they felt the school was worth supporting. We'd had lots of visitors as part of our 'keeping the doors open'.
31. The Secretary of State got lots of letters including a personal letter from LRM [REDACTED]. It still didn't look like he was being convinced. I had one shot left in my arsenal. I sent him one more letter saying he was about to close the school and he hadn't even consulted our religious superiors and that he had to speak to our Provincial. The upshot was that we finished up down in Whitehall. He decided not to close the school at that point, but we knew it wouldn't last. The Secretary of State for Scotland was Fairchild, or Fairbrand. Something like that. At that stage I was forty years old and didn't think I could do much more, so I asked the boss for a change.

Policy

32. I don't recall policy documents. One of the things that changed in my lifetime were policy documents, procedures, risk assessments, things like that. I don't think they had those things. We had managers meetings, staff meetings and minutes would be taken. Any decisions made would be written down but I don't remember policy documents as such. I presume the minutes were retained and are in our archives somewhere.

Strategic Planning

33. I think strategic planning was happening under our feet. Firstly the building of the new school and the new facilities there. A couple of years later the Social Work Services Group called up and said there was money in the budget and asked if we wanted one of these play barns, a huge hall, for games. Father **LOB** told them that of course we would. That meant that the wooden games hut that we had became a theatre instead of a play hall with a stage at one end. A couple of years later the building of the administration block gave us an open plan office for the social work team, a conference room, headmaster's office and an interview room. There was a lot more space for meetings and things like that.
34. Everything at the school came from the Social Work Services Group. We were fortunate we had a good relationship with them. They were aware that Father **LOB** didn't ask for anything he didn't need and they knew he didn't waste money.

Managing and recruiting staff

35. Working as a small group, every morning we would have a meeting to find out what was going on, what was happening that day, if anyone was suffering in any way. We had continual communication. With such a small team you would learn straight away if anything was going on that was causing concern.

36. We recruited staff in the old fashioned way. We advertised, got applications and sent out for references. In those days people would send you a reference and tell you the truth. Sometimes we would speak to the referees. We would hold interviews for positions. If it was for a teacher, it would be that deputy of education and myself who would conduct those interviews.
37. I couldn't really say whether the staff we were employing had experience in care and protection. I presume they did, particularly if they were care staff. That would be the area that we would be interested in. If they didn't then they would require training and supervision from the deputy or senior social worker. We would take them on for a specific role. Even the handy man and domestic staff related to kids.

Training of staff

38. The training of all the staff took the form of social work staff who were not qualified receiving in-service training with a view to future qualifications. Training was continued by way of weekly support groups for those involved in group work and the individual counselling of children. There were also regular supervision sessions conducted by the deputies. Close links were established with colleges and universities for teaching and social work staff. List D psychologists were very useful as well as training officers. So there were efforts to develop staff as we went along.
39. Key people to me were the two psychologists and the List D schools training officer. They brought lots of ideas into the school. It's difficult to remember exactly what the training officer did, but she would be responsible for some of the in-service courses. She was employed by Social Work Services Group. I think she knew she was appreciated by us. I can't remember how many times she would be at the school.

Supervision/Appraisal/Evaluation

40. I don't think there was a formal system of evaluation or appraisal. We just passed on our thoughts to each other as and when required. The management team were

extremely competent. I can't remember having to tell anyone that their actions were inappropriate.

Living arrangements

41. In the early days, when I was a young Brother I had a corner in one of the rooms with a curtain around it. In the latter days, when the boys had their new units, I lived in the big Georgian house. That's where all the Salesians lived. We all had our own rooms. The younger Salesians would stay in the units. Each unit had two staff rooms for sleeping in. Fairly late on in my time there we employed a nightwatchman. His role was to sit in his little room, stay awake and make sure there was no nonsense during the night. There were still young Salesians in each unit.
42. I think anyone could go into the boys' units during the day. The cleaners would go there. I don't think it was locked. Overnight there would be two staff members in each unit and the nightwatchman. There may have been a senior member of staff there if there was a problem and they were on call during the night. I was called out during the night once because a kid was refusing to go to bed.

Interaction with the boys

43. My interaction with the boys diminished during my later years working at the school, which was a shame in one sense because I was in a management role and latterly, I was fighting to save the school. I moved back a bit from working with the kids. I can't remember exactly when this was, it might have been in my last two years at the school.

Children

44. It was all boys at the school. The age group started at eleven. Everything changed with the introduction of Children's Panels. I can remember we had one boy who was younger than eleven but generally it was secondary school age. In the old system, we kept them for as long as we thought they needed to be kept. Some of their cases were

reviewed in the school and the boy would be interviewed by one of the managers. He could be let out on licence and if he was, he could be recalled by us back to the school. The social worker at the school would visit the family at home and make sure things were going properly. So it was very much in our court.

45. After the Children's Panel came in boys were reviewed every year. In most cases if they were sent back to the school it would only be for two or three months, so their term in the school was much shorter. It was much less under our control and the aftercare was taken away completely. That was the disadvantage of the Children's Panel system because before their introduction we could release them on licence and bring them back or bring them back for an interview and tell them, this was their last chance. I can't recall when this system finished. Children's Panels came about in 1971 or 1972.

Washing and bathing

46. In the new school the showers were downstairs and the two units were upstairs. I think there were eight cubicles. The boys would come down, have their shower and get dried then the next lot would come down and take over. At the end of the shower session I would tell the last boy to remember and turn the light off when he came out and I would go up with the penultimate boy. You had to protect yourself as well as the boys. You didn't leave yourself open to accusations. There was a matron for medical problems.

Trips and Holidays

47. The boys went home most weekends. There was a school bus, later on they had two minibuses. The Glasgow boys would be taken to Queen Street station and the others went by train. From there, they just went home by themselves. Most of the kids came from Glasgow.
48. We acquired a single decker coach from Rennie's, a bus company, in Dunfermline and took the kids to Glasgow school camps. We were given accommodation in another

school for a fortnight. We went to Aberdeen, Golspie, Stevenston and Inverurie, places like that, for two weeks with the kids. These trips were great. Everybody loved them.

Absconding

49. Absconding always concerned me. It went in waves. I was nearly arrested for kidnapping once. I went down to Aberdour beach, picked up two boys and put them in the back of the car before driving off. One of the locals called 999 and told the police someone had picked up two boys and driven off in haste. We had already called the police and informed them of the two boys absconding, so they came up to the school and I told them the boys were back. The officers said they were glad because they were having a busy night as two boys had been kidnapped. I asked where this was and they said it was at the beach earlier. I told them I can solve that case as well. I had to go down with the police and meet the man that had called them to verify it was me that he had seen. I don't think the police spoke to the boys. I think we handled that part.

Visitors

50. There wasn't a great deal of visits from parents as the boys went home most weekends. On sports day the parents were invited as well as various guests. Archbishop Winning from Glasgow came for one sports day. He was magic. He stayed outside chatting with the kids and the parents.

Discipline and punishment

51. I did have influence on discipline and punishment. When corporal punishment was used that was down to the management team. It was our nuclear deterrent really.
52. We basically had the same approach as most Salesian schools to discipline and punishment, which was warm and friendly and as far as possible, but also relaxed. Don Bosco had clear ideas. He said, if you need to punish somebody, whatever you

do, a punishment is a punishment. You don't need to come down with fire and brimstone. So the most common punishment was no television that night, something like that. In the summer nights Father LOB the bursar, kept the grounds immaculate. So, raking the grass was a great punishment. The trouble was, some of the boys liked it!

53. Later on the big sanction was not getting home for the weekend. In the early days they didn't get home at all except at holiday time. But gradually they got weekend leave, depending on behaviour. So the big sanction was that if you got a bad mark through bad behaviour you didn't get home at the weekend. What was noticeable was if one kid started mucking about, this would start another one off.
54. As I said, corporal punishment was the nuclear deterrent and eventually we phased it out. It was meant to be the thought of it rather than the actual use of it. I was in favour of it on occasion. Absconding could be a problem. I always felt it was important that absconding didn't spread. You didn't automatically get the belt for absconding but you usually did. It was to discourage the others. Boys always had a fair sense of justice. At times I had to give a boy the belt then go down and have my dinner with them. You didn't get resentment, it was more a, "Well, ok". I don't remember specific things, but extreme incidents would warrant corporal punishment. I don't remember individual incidents. The amount the boys got was limited by regulations and the most the boys of their age would get at one time was four strikes of the belt. I can't remember where I saw this, it was probably in the List D regulations or something like that. It might have even been written in the front of the punishment book. I can't remember.
55. When boys were fighting, first of all you would try to separate them. That's another area of concern these days, separating two kids who are knocking lumps out of each other. I used to say, I'm sure it was my mother's phrase, "You go to that side of the yard and you go to the other side of the yard and stay away from each other". That wouldn't necessarily result in corporal punishment unless it was really serious.
56. There was a boy who threw a pot of freshly made tea over another boy who was scalded all over his chest. Corporal punishment wasn't used on that occasion. You

had to come at it in a different way. His punishment was that he lost his summer holidays. His social worker or group leader would have to sit down and have a long session with him. He had committed physical injury. We certainly said to him very clearly that he wasn't getting any holidays until the other boy got out of hospital. I didn't know what it was about. Those kids could raise an eyebrow and it would annoy someone. They were great to work with but they weren't little angels.

57. It will be recorded somewhere exactly when corporal punishment was phased out but off the top of my head I would say it was two thirds of the way through my time at the school. If it was used it was recorded in the punishment book, which was kept in the head's office. The senior staff would write this up. There was always a witness to corporal punishment and it was never in front of the other boys. It would be carried out in one of the classrooms because there wouldn't be enough room in the office. It wasn't written down anywhere but it was accepted that it had to be a member of the senior staff that carried out corporal punishment.
58. There was no guidance given to the children as to what would result in corporal punishment. I think that was just passed on by word of mouth. I can't remember telling anybody how things worked. They would be told by their peers. I would be speaking to the boys in the yard and I would say to them, "We use the belt when the brain stops working, if you use your brain there is no need for the belt". That is just the Salesian approach.
59. My memory is that not getting to watch television or not getting home at weekends were not recorded in the punishment book. I certainly, didn't record it. It might have been recorded by the boys group leader, written in his notes about a particular kid. In the social work office they all had their own desks and notes and things. If they were kept they would be in the archives.

Restraint

60. Restraint was very much a later development and could almost be traced back to the arrival of one particular boy. I don't remember any other earlier episodes of violence. In this new situation, we did the best we could. After reading the papers, etc, this boy was admitted to the school with great caution. He was a very disturbed person. Basically, if something didn't suit him, he would throw his glasses on the floor, pick up the nearest heavy object and start smashing the windows. We introduced an emergency number on the phones to call, which meant a senior staff member would respond quickly. In practice for me it meant putting the boy on the floor and holding his arms. Experience quickly told me that anything else invited a bite on the hand or arm, or a kick on the shins. So I'd put him to the floor and hold his arms. It was the best I could do.
61. I didn't have any training in restraint. I'm not sure if any of the staff had any training in restraint unless they did that through their social work training. A senior member of staff would get there quickly and do something about it. If you held him down he would shout and swear and then he would calm down and almost fall asleep. I can't remember if his behaviour improved while he was at the school. He went from us to a children's home in Glasgow. He was very disturbed, but when he wasn't angry he was a lovely kid. I would prefer not to give his name.
62. I didn't see restraint being used much at all. I think it was probably me most of the time. It wouldn't be often, but if you heard the phone ring you knew you had to get up the stairs. If I restrained him, I would be the only one carrying it out. Sometimes when he calmed down he would talk about his mother. Was that what was bugging him? That's what I took out of it. I am not a psychologist and it might be naïve to think that. Staff would take him for a drink or something and I would stagger down the stairs, recovering. It is exhausting restraining someone. I couldn't say how many times that happened. It was rewarding in its own way as you were helping him, apart from the bite marks.

63. I had some kids going off to a camp once. I called the doctor and told him that they hadn't had their third tetanus jag. He told me that he thought they would be ok because they'd had two. He said they weren't particularly worried about the third, they were more worried about dog bites and human bites and I was looking at my hand and I had a perfect set of teeth marks. I had to restrain one other boy on one occasion, which I did in the same way.

Wellbeing

64. Most staff members didn't ask the kids in a formal setting about any concerns they had. This would be done by their group leader. We would speak to them out in the yard. One of the things we did change was eating in the dining room. Looking after the dining room was the hardest job. Everybody seemed to recognise that. We decided the best thing to do was to eat with the kids. So two or three members of staff would eat with them and that changed the whole ball game in the dining room. There were far less discipline problems. It was much more relaxed.
65. Prior to this these kids might be squabbling over food or not getting enough or kicking someone under the table. A lot of that disappeared. It wasn't one person trying to keep an eagle eye on everything. As well as that you are talking to kids at the table, having a conversation with them. You might well say, "What's the matter with you today". I don't remember when we brought this in but it was one of the best things that we did. It changed the whole dynamic of the dining room.

Problems at the establishment

Concerns over education

66. I don't think I had any concerns about the quality of education for the boys. We were very much aware that it was remedial education mostly. When I was teaching, if anything aroused a bit of interest I would follow it.

67. When the school was working fully, I wasn't teaching then, so there was the deputy and three teachers in the school. It was mostly reading and writing that was taught. Maybe one boy a year showed enough to go to an outside school. It wasn't many. We had a good relationship with a school in Dunfermline. The head teacher knew us well. A kid could go to school and if necessary they could call us and let us know if something went wrong. I don't remember any incidents.

Concerns over quality of accommodation

68. We finished up with a purpose built school. By the time I left it was all still new. This was mostly done while I was in Italy. When I came back the main part was more or less in place.

Concerns over placements

69. We always said, although it was never scientifically proven, that the boys placed at the school were more disturbed as the years went by. We felt the 'wee rogues' as we used to call them, weren't coming any more. Instead, it was more kids with personality problems. We could refuse a kid, but it was a big decision. We were under a tremendous amount of pressure not to refuse anyone from the school. Any head that refused a kid would be labelled as not doing their job properly. There were kids that we took with apprehension. We used to get the papers from the social work department and maybe you would get to see the kid beforehand. But you could refuse if you felt you could not meet the child's needs. I can't remember if we ever refused a kid. Sometimes we regretted not refusing some, but that was a 'different kettle of fish'. There were some very disturbed kids.

Concerns over suitability and/or quality of staff

70. I only had concerns with some staff in the sense that they might be making heavy weather of things. For instance, if they couldn't control a group of kids properly, you might say, "Come on, let's do better than this". The deputy for education would talk to

them about it. I would hear about it generally, if there was a lot of noise coming from a classroom and things like that.

71. We had the occasional complaint that a member of staff had slapped a child. The staff member might deny this allegation, but the person who would deal with that would have been the boy's group leader. They would find out what had gone wrong. If the staff member required to be spoken to perhaps SNR or I would have done that. Presumably that would be sufficient if it was an isolated incident. There weren't many incidents. I don't think a parent would necessarily be told about it, but I couldn't be sure. I wouldn't keep a note of these things. I think the boy's group leader would have recorded it.
72. I think the group leader speaking to the boy and myself or SNR speaking to the staff member was effective. Whether we should have done more, I don't know. I don't recall any repeated incident by the same staff member. I don't recall any specific reasons for these incidents other than dealing with difficult kids. They knew how to test your patience.

Bullying

73. We had to be careful about boys bullying others at the school. Boys could bully each other. If you were in the yard you had to have eyes in the back of your head. You could tell when something was amiss in any shape or form. I got very angry with a kid once who was bullying other children. He had been bullied before. I took him aside and told him he should know how it feels and to remember when he was bullied. I don't remember a long term problem with any one person bullying another.
74. We would sometimes involve the parents, both in the old form and the new school. The parents were always very supportive. It wasn't a common thing. If we had a good relationship with the outside social worker we would maybe ask if they could bring the parents along. We might inform them that the way things are their kid will be going nowhere at the moment.

Concerns about the establishment

75. I don't remember any external issues from other bodies or parents while I was at Aberdour.

Child protection arrangements

76. Caring and protecting children was the way of Don Bosco. We passed on what we had learned. For example, not being alone with a kid when interviewing kids. All that sort of stuff was passed on from our tradition. It's in our genes. There was always a staff member on duty in the yard, maybe two. It was just part of our system of working with kids. When a member of staff joined, you spoke about the ethos in general. It was part of our system. That's one of the things that Don Bosco was very wide eyed about.

Trusted Adult/confidante

77. Trusted adults weren't formally identified, but available. I was aware at the time that there were other outlets for the children. There was the handyman and there was one kid that related very well to him. I don't remember what their conversation was, but one of the other staff said to me 'that's great because he, [REDACTED] I think his name was) found somebody to talk to'. That was comforting to me. It was working. I can't recall anything specifically that came back to me from a complaint outside of school.

"Abuse"

78. There wasn't any technical definition of abuse when I was at Aberdour. It was assumed everybody knew what they were doing. I once saw a boy who I thought was hysterical when I walked into the room and was hyperventilating. He was being dealt with by some staff and I got an impression that they weren't handling it properly. I took the boy

outside of the situation and calmed him down and dealt with it myself. The impression that I had was that I had just walked into the room and they were adopting the approach of letting him get it out of his system. I thought it wasn't a thing he was going to get out of his system. I thought what they were doing wasn't the right approach at this particular moment. He was hyperventilating and breathing rapidly. I moved in and took him away and calmed him down. I sat him down and said 'Now come on, what's all this about?' I took him out of the situation and it was just an instantaneous reaction. I don't think I went back afterwards to talk to the staff about it. I don't recall if I did or not.

79. I don't remember if I ever had a case where I felt further disciplinary action was required. I don't remember anyone ever being dismissed. I don't remember any member of staff resigning because of a complaint by a child.
80. I don't think there was a staff member who was much more popular than others or anyone who was very popular. A member of staff in the management team was very good with the kids. I never had any concerns with any member of staff and their behaviour.
81. I have been asked if abuse could have happened and that I would not know about this. You'd be a brave man, if you said "no, abuse couldn't have happened and gone undetected." I would have been very surprised if there had been any abuse at the school especially if they were sexual abusers. They are, however, masters at hiding. I would be surprised as most likely we would have heard. I think the kids would have been whispering. There was a member of staff in another school and whenever his name came up there was always a little reaction amongst the kids who had been to that school. When you are with the kids you notice things like that. I recall who that member of staff was in another school. I don't want to give his name. I think he is in prison. Your antennae would twitch and you would think there was something there. I didn't get that about any of [REDACTED] staff.

Allegations of Abuse

82. I was never the subject of any allegations of abuse or ill-treatment when I was in the school. Since I left the school there was a police investigation.

External Monitoring

83. We had an HMI of Education but they didn't come very often. That was it on the educational side. The open door policy was part of our remit. Keep the place fresh and let people know what's going on. I have referred to the psychologist because they were keeping an eye on proceedings. Managers came in and out, not that very often but they did do that. I can't remember the inspectors interviewing the children when they came in, perhaps they did. I know I was teaching Scottish history and the inspector walked in.
84. The inspectors would speak to the boys if they came into a classroom and ask them what they were doing that day. I don't think there'd be any more discussion other than that. I'm sure the inspectors would speak to [REDACTED] staff and ask what they were doing. They didn't come very often.
85. The best educational input was the year we did the remedial teacher's course. The course tutor had to come and see what we were doing during the year. We had two or three visits during the year to see what we were doing as part of the course and as well as being assessed.
86. I don't remember HMI coming in when I was in management. They might have and I just can't remember. We weren't short of visitors. Social Work Services Group came often to see what was going on. They were our main line of communication. I don't recall ever reading an HMI report about the school. I don't recall receiving any concerns about the school from the HMI. We had good facilities and good teachers and we were just getting on with the job.

Record Keeping

87. Record keeping then wasn't like what it is today. I'm still working and looking after old priests and I'm amazed when stuff comes in from my office. They ask, 'Are your risk assessments up to date?' That wasn't the world in those days. I'm presuming that the social workers had notes about their own cases in their social work office. They'd come to case conferences with their reports. I know there was a school log because I had to write it myself. It was only the main events, and the punishment book as and when needed.
88. I don't know if I ever spoke to staff about record keeping. I thought the teachers were better than me. I don't remember asking to see their records. Maybe one of the other members of the senior management team did, I don't know. They were more experienced than I was at teaching.
89. I think record keeping changed when I moved into management because we'd gone into this system of having group leaders. They were much more involved with their cases and they would have kept better notes than before. Before that there wouldn't have been much at all I don't think. I'm only guessing.
90. Was adequate information retained when I was in the management team? Was it retained, I don't know. Was it used? Yes, because we discussed the kids at case conferences and at regular team meetings. Fifty boys is not an awful lot so you got to know them well. We knew what we were dealing with and it was shared around, but whether it was as formal as it is nowadays I don't know.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

91. In my time, I can't think of anybody who was subject to any investigation by the police.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

92. I was never involved in the handling of reports or civil claims made against the school by former residents concerning historical abuse.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

93. During my time in management, neither the school nor any member of staff was ever the subject of a police investigation into alleged abuse or ill-treatment of children who had been at the school.
94. All of the List D schools were investigated by Police Scotland and I had a lengthy interview with them. I told them what I'm telling the Inquiry. I'm not sure of the date I was interviewed but I think it was four or five years ago. Someone had organised an investigation into all of the List D schools and it was farmed out to different police forces and police came from Aberdeen to England to interview me about the school.
95. The first time I was interviewed as a witness and they came back a short time later and said they wanted to interview me as a suspect. The police went home with much the same information I've given to the Inquiry. They were allegations of physical abuse. I told them as far as I was concerned they weren't true. One boy said I'd kicked and punched him which I've never done to anyone. I answered those allegations and I've not heard anything else from the police.
96. I've never given evidence at a trial concerning alleged abuse of children at the school. One of the staff was interviewed by the police in England on behalf of police in Scotland. He is dead now and he strongly denied the allegations.

Convicted abusers

97. I don't know of any person who worked at the school being convicted of the abuse of a child at the school.

Other staff

Brother LMW

98. Brother LMW also known as LMW or LMW I knew him as LMW LMW I knew him very well. He was at Aberdour when I first went there and he came and went. He was a Salesian. He went to our place near Macclesfield. He might have gone to our place near Blaisdon. He went on the missions to Africa and then he lived with us in in England until he died four years ago. I had no concerns about him. He was older than me. He was the woodwork instructor at Aberdour. He was a good friend of mine and I've nothing to say against him at all. I knew him very well.
99. I saw him with children and I had no concerns. He acted like a good Salesian with the children, friendly but sometimes he had to stop misbehaviour. He was firm but fair. I don't remember ever seeing him strike anyone. He'd have to control the children and he did that by raising his voice. He was in the job long before me and he was my mentor in so many ways. I think he was just good at his job and the kids respected him. I didn't see him abuse children. I only heard of him abusing a child when this complaint came down to England through the police. He went down to answer that himself in the police station. He was interviewed before I was. I'm not sure now if it was part of the same investigation that I was interviewed by. I think the allegations put to him were about indecent behaviour and he denied it all. I believe that he didn't do anything. Nothing more happened with the allegation after his interview by the police.

Brother LNB

100. Brother LNB left the order and at that stage he was Father LNB. I've never heard any allegations against him. He followed me to the school as a young Brother. That would be 1966 or thereabouts. He did a couple of years there and then came back as a priest, but I'm not sure of that now, he'd be on our list of staff. He's a bit younger than me. His role was the same as mine in the school, a young beginner. I think he did come back as a priest. He would then be a general member of staff before the division between social work and teachers or maybe he went into the social work side. This was in the 1970s. I have a vague memory that the senior appointment was a choice between me or him. I got the job. I knew him quite well. I saw him with children and I had no concerns. I didn't know him as well as I knew LMW but I had no concerns about him. I can't remember any incident of him disciplining children. I can't remember ever seeing him abuse a child and I never heard any discussion or suggestion that he had abused a child.

Convictions

101. I have no criminal convictions.

Awareness of abuse

102. I don't remember anyone saying they had been abused. On the odd occasion a child might say 'so and so' slapped me or something like that. They were more likely to say 'so and so' gave me a 'doing'. A slap was translated into getting a 'doing'. That's what you found out when you investigated. These incidents were very rare.

Reporting of abuse

103. Staff weren't given guidance on taking reports of abuse. At least not in the formal sense. Part of the tradition was that they would go to their next in line, the next appropriate person, and say 'so and so' is complaining about whatever. It was on an ad-hoc basis. Whoever was dealing with it would speak to one of the senior staff. They weren't formally instructed in what to do in these situations. It was left to common sense. I would hear about such things in our daily management meeting. I wouldn't say I was required to be informed.
104. I don't think there was a formal reporting process for children to make a complaint. If a boy couldn't speak to his own group leader, to one of the senior staff and there were other people around that they could speak to. There was the psychologist. In the latter days there was an old Salesian priest who used to sit in the yard. He had a wheelchair. He would just chat to the kids. They could speak to him. Even the gardener was available. There were plenty of people around.
105. I think the boys felt they were able to complain if they needed to. On the whole I think they were happy. But the bottom line being they didn't ask to come to the school. I think they were happy and they would talk freely during the day. There was not so much complaining in a sense but maybe commenting that they didn't like the dinner that day or 'so and so' had given them a row. It was all part of the ongoing conversation of the day really.
106. I can't remember anybody ever knocking on my door saying that they wanted to make a complaint. I never had an occasion to record a complaint of abuse. I think it would have gone to the social work office to talk to the kid and make a note in their file. I might have written something in the log, but I don't think I did.

Leaving St John Bosco's school, Aberdour

107. After the campaign to save the school, I asked my superiors for a change. I remain with the order.

Helping the Inquiry

108. I have been asked what advice I would give to someone about awareness of abuse. I would say to them to not assume that every allegation of abuse is truthful. We got on well with our young guys but some of them might see an opportunity. If there has been an effect on anybody that has continued to this day then I am deeply sorry. It's not because I knew about it. I didn't know about it.
109. I have been asked about what advice I would give to someone working in similar situation to the teachers at Aberdour. My advice is that you have to have eyes in the back of your head and be aware and know some of the signs. Like I said if you see kids whispering in a group you don't have to barge in but you've got to keep your ear to the ground. Our system involved being with the kids all the time and we didn't just send them into the yard to play. We were with them all the time. It wasn't just supervision, we were playing with them and organising games and having a bit of fun. You pick up a lot doing that and Don Bosco or somebody else said, the yard and the dining room are key places because that's where you hear things. I remember going on holiday with the kids and they were playing near a river. There was a buzz behind me and they were talking about a watch they'd stolen from somebody. They couldn't see me there, but I was standing right in their midst and they were so used to seeing me. So I would say have awareness and protect yourself as well as the kids.

Other information

110. I gave evidence at Inquiry hearings on 7 August 2024. My witness statement had not been finalised at that time. This is why some paragraph numbers and parts which were referred to in my oral evidence do not match those currently in my finalised statement.
111. 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.....

KMK

Dated.....

14-7-25