

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MKF

Support person present: No

1. My name is MKF My date of birth is 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

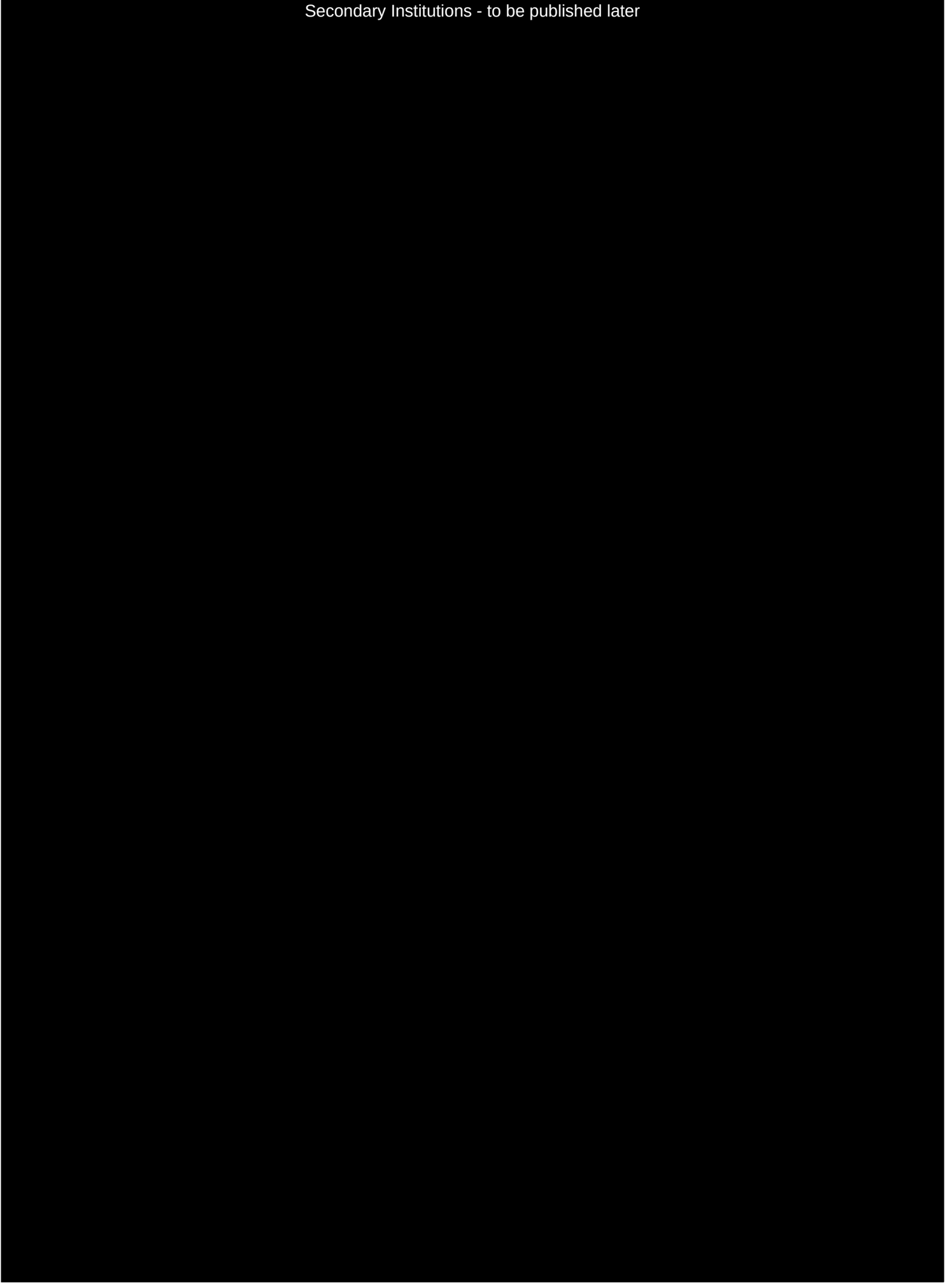
Background

2. My father was Polish and came to Scotland during the Second World War. He met my mother and the rest is history. I was born in Perth. I completed my teacher training in 1971. I have taught in various schools since then. I have a diploma in education with merit in teaching, a master's degree and a PHD degree. I also studied for a certificate in what was called remedial education at that time, for children with learning difficulties. I did a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate with Cambridge University and the Royal Society of the Arts. I also studied for various other curriculum enrichment courses along the way.
3. I taught The first school I taught at was Perth Academy. I was there for about four years. I then went to Bellshill Academy, followed by Rosehall High School in Coatbridge. I was then at Lendrick Muir School in Rumbling Bridge, Kinross-shire before going to St. Ninian's, Falkland. When St. Ninian's closed in 1983, I moved to Auchmuty High School in Glenrothes. I then taught at Dunfermline High School. I started my master's when I was at Dunfermline High. Laterally, I taught in the primary school sector in Dundee, possibly for about three years. My last school teaching jobs were probably in the late 1980s. After that, I taught in the applied language studies department at Dundee University and St. Andrew's University. I

taught applied language studies. At St. Andrew's, I was the [REDACTED]
department and then I became [REDACTED] I retired from teaching quite a few years
ago.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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St Ninian's School, Falkland, Fife

14. I was appointed to St. Ninian's in January 1981 as a teacher of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I was there until the school closed in 1983. The job at St. Ninian's was advertised, I applied for it and was duly appointed. I think the advert might have been in one of the local newspapers. I was interviewed for the job by the head teacher, Brother Farrell, and Mrs Nicol, who was my predecessor. Mrs Nicol showed me around. I then received a letter, offering me the job. It was a permanent job.
15. I didn't really have any knowledge of St. Ninian's before I applied for the job, although I lived in Abernethy. The school was just across the hill and yet I had never heard of it. I thought it was near to where I lived and would be easy to travel to. It was a listed school so the cohort of pupils there was different. I think it categorised as a List D type school. St. Ninian's was for children with large gaps in their education, some of whom were teetering on the brink of a criminal subculture and were in moral danger. They had low IQs and sometimes behavioural problems as well. The age range of the boys was eleven to sixteen. There were about forty boys in the school when I was there. Most of the boys tended to remain for their schooling. I can't remember any boys being thrown out. After it was decided that the school would close, the numbers whittled down.
16. I was told that the aim of St. Ninian's was to provide a stable and caring environment as a mainly Catholic school. It was opened in 1950 for boys of secondary school age

who were in need of care and protection. I think it initially started catering for orphans or children who were neglected or out with parental control. I think the boys were referred from most regions of Scotland, but mainly from Strathclyde. It was felt that Falkland House would be favourable and conducive to refining and uplifting boys with emotional or behavioural problems.

17. The building was owned by the Crichton-Stuart family, who were staunch Catholics. There was a small chapel within the building. My impression of St. Ninian's was that it was very well run. It was strictly run but not repressively so. The boys were well disciplined. They were well supervised and well ordered. They didn't just run amok and they had duties to do within the school. It was organised in much the same way as a non-residential school.

Staff

18. There was a team of dedicated Christian Brothers, who ran the school. When I was there, Brother **MBS** was the **SNR**. He was also the bursar. There was a Brother Keane, who taught maths, and Brother **MHG** who taught RE and English. There were two younger brothers, Brothers Kelly and Farrell. Brother Farrell was the headmaster and also taught RE. He became the Reverend Father Farrell eventually, as he became a priest after the school closed. I'm not sure what Brother Kelly taught. There was also a **teacher** called **BHB**. He died whilst I was at the school. He died suddenly at home, just before the school closed. He lived in Falkland with his wife and sons. There was another teacher of general subjects, Mrs Philp, and a PE teacher who came at certain times, Mr **MCG**. Mr **MIK** taught music and art until he left to go to Lendrick Muir.
19. The children used to call me Mr **MKF**, as in the **or** **MKF**. They would hit Brother **MBS** gently on the head and say, "Hi, slapper napper," because he was bald. Brother Kelly was called "Snoopy" because of his inquisitive nature. We were used to that kind of rapport. The headmaster was Brother John Farrell, but the children called him Paddy. That was different from other schools I'd taught in where you wouldn't dare call a teacher by his or her first name.

20. In addition to the teaching staff, there was a groundsman, Mr Kilbane. His wife was a seamstress, who also worked in the school. There was a laundress, whom we used to call Mrs Chekov because her coiffure looked Russian. Her real name was Mrs Hutton. There were two cooks, who alternated, and a couple of kitchen assistants. The school had its own [REDACTED] MBV [REDACTED] As far as I was concerned, staff had open access to all children whilst on duty at the school.
21. The staffing was fairly consistent. There wasn't a lot of turnover. There were regular staff meetings. They were held on a Friday afternoon, usually when the boys were taken home. Any problems or concerns were discussed and debated. I think the meetings were recorded, but I'm not sure. I remember on one occasion there was a debate about extra duties. I mentioned to the head teacher that those of us who were lay teachers had other duties, outside the school. I felt they were asking more and more of us. The head teacher, Brother Farrell, said that if I wasn't happy, I should throw in the towel. When I discussed that with one of the other brothers, I was told that comments like that were inappropriate. The brothers gave their whole lives to the school and I think they expected us to do the same.

Routine at St. Ninian's School

Regular duties

22. My hours were during the day, from nine o'clock to four o'clock. My duties were also to work two evenings a week until nine o'clock. After tea, the boys would have an hour of prep or letter writing. They were encouraged to write letters home. They then had indoor sports, hobbies and games until about nine o'clock. I would go home at that point and I assume the boys then went to bed. I never stayed over at the school.
23. I also had to take my turn of weekend duties. I can't remember if it were every second or third weekend. I would come in after lunch on Saturday. If there was a trip going somewhere, I would accompany the boys on the trip. If I were on duty, I would have

to accompany the boys on the school bus travelling back to school on a Sunday afternoon. I would also be around to supervise at the weekend. There was a great emphasis on perambulation and supervision. If we were on duty, we were expected to know where every child was at any given time, which meant we had to be around, observe and see what they were up to. We obviously had to report back if there was anything untoward.

24. There were times when I would be alone with pupils. If I was with one single pupil, I always kept the door open. That was what I had been advised.

Mornings and bedtime

25. I wasn't involved in getting the boys up in the morning. They were all there, ready for school, fed and suitably dressed, at nine o'clock. The boys had dormitories and there were four boys to a room. Each boy had his own bed, chest of drawers and wardrobe. I only had to go there once or twice to look for somebody but I wasn't there on a regular basis. I think the Brothers supervised the boys at night times. The Brothers had their own rooms, adjacent to the dormitories.

Mealtimes/Food

26. The boys were well fed. I sometimes ate my meals in the school, in the refectory. They liked teachers to be around. I would have lunch in the refectory and sometimes an evening meal, if I were on duty. The staff ate in the refectory with the boys, but at a separate table. Mrs Brown, the cook, was very good and the quality of the food was excellent. There was always extra food if the boys wanted it.

Clothing/uniform

27. There wasn't really a uniform. I think they were all given a kind of anorak or body warmer at one time. The boys were well looked after in respect of clothing. They didn't lack decent clothes. I think the clothes were provided by the establishment. There was a laundress there, Mrs Hutton.

Leisure time

28. Sport played a major part of the school curriculum. Every afternoon, after lessons finished, the boys would either go to the gym or down to the sports field. There were two football pitches there. Brother Farrell, Brother Kelly and MCG, the [REDACTED] were responsible for the sport. The boys were taught games like football and cricket. They also did athletics. I remember they had cross-country runs. There was a hill right behind the school called the East Lomond. BHB would do cross-country running to the top of the East Lomond. The boys would time themselves. They competed against each other, which was deemed healthy and competitive.
29. The boys went for swimming lessons once a week. I think it was on a Thursday afternoon. Mr BHB was also a qualified swimming instructor. They would go to the swimming pool in Perth in the school bus, which was a forty seater bus. I didn't go to Perth, because they changed the venue to Glenrothes Sports Centre. I would go there from time to time on the bus, in a supervisory role.
30. In winter time, the boys made sledges in the technical room. They used the sledges in the snow. The children did some animal care too. They had pets. They had a parrot, called Tommy, rabbits and guinea pigs, which were housed in the school basement.
31. The boys did indoor sports, hobbies and games in the evenings until nine o'clock. Staff were expected to interact with the children if they were on duty. One of the activities that I arranged was a group involved in writing and compiling a newsletter. Once a month, it was sent out to parents, families and friends of the school. The work was done mainly by the pupils themselves. The boys put the newsletter in envelopes and addressed them. I then handed them into the office and they were posted.
32. A lot of the boys were dramatists and liked to act out. On one occasion, some of the boys dressed up and performed the story of Tam O'Shanter for Burns night whilst Mr BHB recited the poem. He had a booming voice, being ex-military.

Trips and holidays

33. Most of the children went home for the holidays. Occasionally, one or two would stay at St. Ninian's for the holidays, if there was a problem, for example at home. I more or less enjoyed the normal school holidays, although I might be asked to come in for the odd day to supervise.

School

34. The children had a curricular timetable, much the same as I had experienced in my previous school jobs. I would imagine it was drawn up by the head teacher. Every Monday morning there was a whole-school assembly. It took place in the school hall. A prayer and hymn were said and sung. Any recognition or awards were given to the pupils at that juncture. If the boys had won a swimming or athletics certificate, or there was a class prize for something, it would be given then. For example, I ran a competition around Burns Night, which was run by the Burns Federation. The boys had a written test or had to recite poetry. If their recitation or written work came up to standard, they won a certificate which would be presented at assembly. Policies were reiterated and enforced at the assembly, if necessary
35. I wasn't given any instructions as such for classroom. I was really left to my own devices and to use my professional judgement. The children were assessed when they came in. I was involved in diagnostic and attainment testing. We used the Daniels and Diack testing manual along with the Burt and Schonell tests. It was just to get a picture of the boys' academic needs and abilities. I would choose a curriculum that was suitable for the child's needs. My predecessor, Mrs Nicol, had left a lot of good material for reading and learning, but if I needed any teaching materials I could ask for them to be supplied.
36. There wasn't a formal syllabus as such, teaching was more based on individual need. Some of the children were reasonably bright. Others came with quite large gaps in their formal education. We assessed them to find out where and what the gaps were.

We tried to teach them whilst bearing these things in mind and tried to make lessons as interesting and practical as possible.

37. When I was at St. Ninian's, there were four classes: four year groups, first, second, third and fourth and the classes were arranged by age. I taught all four year groups. They averaged twelve pupils per class. There was an emphasis on art, music and technical subjects. The children were encouraged to make something in technical subjects that they could take home and use. Mr MIK was the [REDACTED] teacher. He encouraged the children to play musical instruments. They would perform at weekly Mass, which was held once a week on a Thursday before lunch. During the course of the Mass, which was taken by a visiting priest, the musicians would accompany the hymns.
38. The children were also taught maths and English. Remedial tuition was put in place for a select few boys who were really struggling. Home economics and science were introduced laterally when I was there. They were taught by Mrs Philp. Mr BHB was also keen on drama. He did the odd sketch, which would be performed at social nights. For example, we had a Burns night, which I organised, and a St. Andrew's night. The boys and visitors attended those nights. Mr BHB had a professional singing voice of a high standard and often entertained at school functions as well as locally.
39. It was very rare for the children to sit educational exams. I can only recall one boy who sat his O'Grade arithmetic and that was it. The other children just followed the curriculum of the school. We worked hard with the boys, but they weren't of the required standard to sit external exams. A lot of the boys were well enough behaved, but there was a rough and tumble element to them. A lot of the children who came to St. Ninian's were very street-wise. Some of them weren't terribly motivated to achieve or do formal class work. We had to really push them or stimulate them, if we could.
40. The children were usually of low IQ and lacking in motivation. They had little encouragement from their families to attain high academic standards. Many had significant gaps in their education, and experienced learning difficulties. Therefore, meaningful relationships and rapport had to be forged to build up their self-confidence.

It wasn't always easy. I didn't get any training or go on any courses when I was there. You were more or less left to your own professional devices. If there was a problem, it was referred to either the head teacher or the [REDACTED], Mr [REDACTED] MBV [REDACTED]

Healthcare

41. The Brothers and the resident matron were responsible for healthcare and medication of the boys. The [REDACTED] much to the amusement of the children, especially when a spare one was hung up in her toilet for all to see. She looked after the boys' personal hygiene, medication and emotional needs. If there were any problems, I would refer them to her if it was within her domain but I never really had much to do with her at all.
42. A GP visited once a week, if required. I never really had anything to do with the visiting doctor. If the boys needed dental care they went to the local dentist in Auchtermuchty. There was a hairdresser who came in once a week or once a fortnight, but most of the boys had their hair dressed while at home.

Religious instruction

43. Each class had two periods of religious instruction per week. The Roman Catholic faith was taught. It was usually taken by the Brothers, but sometimes by a visiting priest. I don't know what was taught in the RE classes because I wasn't involved. It was mainly the headmaster who taught RE. There was a visiting priest from the Redemptorist monastery in Perth, Father Shannon. He came to hear confessions from the students.
44. Being a Catholic school, Mass was held twice a week in the school chapel. One Mass took place on a Thursday before lunch time. It was part of the school curriculum so it was compulsory for the boys to attend. As far as I'm aware, nobody ever complained. They probably saw it as an escape from the classroom routine. I think it was just assumed teachers would attend. I went to Mass, as it was part of the school day and I was still on duty. At Mass, pupils played instruments to accompany the hymns. They practiced in the music class.

45. There was another Mass held first thing on certain mornings, but I can't remember on which day. It wasn't compulsory for the boys to attend that one. There was also an option for the boys to attend weekly mass at Falkland Palace chapel, if they wished to go. Holy Days of Obligation were observed. The pupils were given the morning off school. I don't know what they did. I didn't have to go in, but I would imagine the pupils may have been taught the significance of the Holy Day.

Chores

46. The brothers were in charge of allocating chores. The boys had a rota for washing up and drying cutlery and crockery after meals. They had to set up the dining hall for all meals. They had some cleaning chores to do in the school. They had to sweep the main hall. It was usually Brother Kelly who organised all that. He was quite strict. The boys all did their bit, sometimes with a bit of moaning, but they had to do it.
47. The boys chopped wood in winter with [REDACTED] BHB, the [REDACTED] teacher. They distributed it to the local community as fire logs for the elderly.

Birthdays and Christmas

48. The pupils normally got a cake for their birthday and everybody would sing, "Happy Birthday". I don't know whether they received a present or anything like that. I think they got presents at Christmas.
49. The boys collected food for a Christmas hamper. They ask their parents if they were willing to contribute when they were on visits home. The senior citizens in the village were then invited to a Christmas party in the school and the hamper was distributed. I never attended the party, but as it was a small school and you were always aware of what was going on. Children talk and you would hear them discussing things, especially during leisure activities. They would chat away to me during the magazine time.

Visits

50. Before a boy was admitted to St. Ninian's, an application was submitted to the headmaster by the local authority. The boy, his parents and his social worker would visit the school and he could then be offered a place. They were advised that they should only accept if they chose to come. They weren't forced to come. It was a case of wanting to come after they'd met the teachers and other students. The visiting boys would come into my classroom, but I wasn't involved in showing them around.
51. Educational psychologists came from time to time. They came from their respective local authorities. I don't know whether they were asked or whether it was part of their routine duties. Sometimes they would come and have a chat with me. They would want to know how a student was doing, what his behaviour and attainment were like.
52. Various agencies came to give talks on careers. Entertainers sometimes came for occasions like Burns night, St. Patrick's night and St. Andrew's night. Somebody would come and play the guitar and get everybody singing. There was a visiting priest from St. Mary's in Perth who came for confessions, Father Shannon. There were also priests from the local area who came to say Mass. Visiting Brothers came from time to time, if they needed a break from whatever they were currently doing. Some didn't get involved with the boys at all. Some of them had an input in sport at the school. For example, the children really liked Brother Brown, who came from Liverpool, because he would play football and games with them.
53. There were visits from what were called Provincial Consultors. They were visiting Brothers, appointed by the Order. They regularly made reports and recommendations. They did visit when I was there, but I can't remember much about them. It was on their recommendation of Brother Coffey, a senior Provincial Consultor, that the school closed.

Inspections

54. It wasn't recognised as appraisal at that time, but the headmaster asked to see what the children had been doing from time to time and checked it out. I do recall him coming in to my class room at times.
55. In my time, there was only one inspection from Fife councillors. I think they were people on the education sub-committee. They wanted to know what was going on because Fife had a financial input into the running of the school. Fife council paid a percentage, along with the referring local authorities. The councillors came from Kirkcaldy, just to see how the school was doing. They came into my room and had a brief chat. They saw what the children were doing and left. I never got any feedback on that so presumably everything was okay.
56. Before I went to St. Ninian's, they used to get two visits a year from the Scottish Education Department. It seemed to taper off, especially as the provision for residential education diminished. I believe it was becoming social work policy that children should not be placed in residential care unless it was deemed absolutely necessary. Children were to be integrated into the community.

██████████ *involvement/records*

57. Children's files and records were held in the school social work office. I could readily access them, if necessary. The children arrived at the school with reports. They were filed in the ██████████ by ██████████ MBV ██████████, the ██████████. I could see those reports if I wanted to. I preferred to judge people myself. That was just my way of doing things. The children were re-tested at regular intervals. It was demanded by referring authorities. I think there was a legal requirement that reports be submitted every three months for a care review. I never attended a care review, they just had my feedback.
58. I was involved in doing the educational reports, but Mr ██████████ MBV ██████████ would prepare the ██████████ reports. Mr ██████████ MBV ██████████ would tell me when a report was required. I had to say how the child was doing, what he was studying, whether or not he was progressing. It

was like a mini school report. I prepared it from my own work records. I had a record book, which I think I kept myself. Education records would have been kept in the file for each child. The files were held in the social work office. I think any records about the school, after it closed, would have gone to the Christian Brothers' archive in Liverpool.

59. Mr MBV was there for advice and liaison between the school and the boys' homes and local authorities. The boys also had field social workers. I didn't have any involvement with them, except for providing my educational report, which went to them via Mr MBV

Family contact

60. Laterally, most of the children went home for the weekend, except for the first weekend after a holiday. That was in keeping with changing social work policy at the time, as they wanted to familiarise the boys with going home and being in their home environment. Before that, they would go home some weekends but not so many. The boys had to earn their leave by working in class and behaving themselves. Anybody who offended forfeited their right to home leave. That decision would be taken by the headmaster or Brother Kelly. They would get input from other teachers, if that were deemed necessary. I don't remember being asked for my opinion.
61. They were taken home on the Friday by the school bus. It then went to collect them from Glasgow, because most of the boys came from the Glasgow area. It left at around four o'clock on the Sunday afternoon from Buchanan bus station. The bus was driven by one of the brothers, who would be accompanied by a staff member. It was usually Brother Kelly who drove the bus.
62. Any visits were arranged by the school social worker. Parents didn't visit a lot. They tended to come if they were asked to come, rather than just popping in to visit the boys. If they did come, the field social worker usually brought them. We didn't have parents nights. I met the parents sometimes and would say hello, but it wasn't on a

regular or formal basis. Parents were invited to come for the annual sports day and some did.

Deaths

63. There were no deaths of children at the school whilst I was there. [BHB], who lived in the [REDACTED] died. He was a very pleasant man, a jack of all trades. He was a [REDACTED] a lay preacher in the Church of Scotland and a very talented [REDACTED]. He had a lovely singing voice and he used to sing at various functions at the school. He was firm with the boys and he stood for no nonsense. It was quite a shock to the school when he died. The pupils were taken to his funeral service in the local church in [REDACTED]. There was a Mass in the school afterwards.
64. [BHB] also taught [REDACTED]. It was under his tutelage that there was a pupil death, but it was some time before I went to St. Ninian's. A boy dropped dead in the gym. He was buried in the Brothers' plot in the cemetery at Falkland. The police were involved and the Procurator Fiscal found that it had been due to natural causes. He had some kind of heart problem. There was also a former pupil, [MCU], who was [REDACTED] in Glasgow in 2012. He was a pupil at the time I was at St. Ninian's.

Preparation for leaving St. Ninian's

65. In the fourth year, Brother [MHG] and myself took vocational educational classes because the boys preparing to leave. Brother [MHG] and myself dealt with the theory side of things. I think the practical side was arranged by the head teacher. They had visits to work places, and work experience was arranged for them. The armed forces were brought in to work with them and somebody from the careers office would come in to talk about various opportunities. They visited mainly local places, such as the linoleum factory and the paper mill in Falkland. There was also a foundry in Auchtermuchty. The work placements were arranged by somebody further up the ladder than I. I don't know whether or not the boys were consulted on their opinions.

Discipline

66. By and large, the boys were quite biddable and obedient. I don't know whether the religious side of things had a bearing on that. You had to set parameters for behaviour, and the boys had to conform to that. If they didn't, we spoke to them about it and explained why it was important. The school was run as a fairly tight ship, but in my opinion it did not operate a repressive regime. It was well-ordered and well-disciplined. There were house rules, which had to be complied with. Courtesy and civility were expected. Moral and spiritual issues were taught, especially in the context of RE. Respect for others and the ethic of actions and consequences were engendered. The boys were always well supervised by staff.
67. Some boys would go into the woods on the school grounds and smoke. That was seen as a disciplinary matter, if they were caught. I think they were made to stand in the hall or deprived of home visits.
68. The main form of punishment was deprivation. Weekend leave could be cancelled, boys were sent to bed early or they could be deprived of any tuck. I think the tuck was normally given to them. They were allowed a certain amount. If a boy misbehaved, he could be told to stand in the entrance hall for a couple of hours on his own. Sometimes, I would go in and there would be a boy standing there. I would ask the boy what he had been up to and he might say, "Snoopy told me to stand in the hall." Punishment was normally distributed by the Brothers. A lot of the misdemeanours were committed during free-time or non-teaching time.
69. If a child misbehaved in my class, I just dealt with it myself through experience. If not, it would be referred to the head teacher. I never really had any problems. I would just explain the problem to the boy or isolate him.
70. The rationale for corporal punishment was of the times and was left to the professional judgement of the staff. Use of the belt or the strap was still in vogue at that time. It was emphasised that the staff were in loco parentis control by law, and corporal punishment should not be given for failure in classwork. That was emphasised by the

head teacher, but I wasn't given any instruction about corporal punishment when I started working at the school.

71. Corporal punishment wasn't normally given in a residential school of that nature, unless it was necessary. It was an unwritten rule, that you didn't go around thumping students who had special needs. You tried to work out other ways of disciplining people, if possible.
72. Very occasionally, you would hear somebody talk about a child getting the belt. It wasn't a regular occurrence. I never saw any brother or other teacher administer corporal punishment. I gave the belt once myself. A boy had been "touching up" the cleaner during free-time. She came to me and told me about it. I had a word with him and told him he shouldn't do things like that. It then happened again. He agreed that he had been told and he hadn't listened to what I had said. I gave him two strokes of the strap. In my professional judgement, I felt that was the correct way to deal with it. He didn't do it again after that, although he did try to set the school on fire at one point. I'm sure I would've reported what the boy had done to somebody else, but I can't recall.
73. The belt I took to St. Ninian's had been given to me by a teacher who was retiring from Perth Academy. Most teachers had one. I had a punishment book which gave the date and the mode of punishment. I brought the book with me. It was my choice to keep it, rather than a requirement of St. Ninian's. When I had been in day schools, I had to record in a punishment book giving any pupil the strap. I had to record the details of the offence. If I had given the strap, I noted the number of strokes and the reason why the boy had been given them. I kept that book in my drawer. It wasn't used very often. I think it remained in the school when I left.
74. Severe breaches of discipline were reported to the police. I remember one boy broke into a car and stole a radio when he was on a day trip to Dundee. The headmaster got to know about it because I told him. The police were involved and dealt appropriately with the situation. A group of boys absconded just before I went to St. Ninian's. They claimed they were being bullied by other boys. They broke into the baker's shop in

Falkland and stole cakes. They were taken to court in Cupar and prosecuted, but I don't know what the upshot was.

Abuse at St. Ninian's

75. I never witnessed any abuse of the boys at St. Ninian's, sexual or otherwise. Some of the boys did confide in me, but it was never about abuse or unfair treatment. Now and again, one overheard things. The only thing I can tell you is that one of the pupils involved in the school magazine told me that he was being bullied by others in his dormitory. He said that Brother Farrell, the headmaster, had taken him to his room and he had slept there for the night. There was no mention of any jiggery-pokery or anything going on. I did think at the time that it was probably unwise for Brother Farrell to have done that, because he was leaving himself wide open to accusation. In fairness, I thought the brother was probably trying to protect the boy and remove him from a nasty situation. The boy's name was [REDACTED]. I believe that he's now in jail for a very serious offence.
76. I learned that the Christian Brothers were strict of old. They had an unenviable reputation for being very liberal with their physical punishments and were extremely strict. They certainly weren't like that at Falkland. I saw the Brothers interact with the boys and it seemed to be a healthy enough interaction to me. They were firm with the boys, but there was a sense of humour there too. I could never have imagined anything like the Farrell and Kelly scenario. There was no mention of anything like that at all at the time.
77. I never saw any evidence of any abuse at St. Ninian's. When it was discovered that Brother Kelly and Brother Farrell had been involved in abuse, rightly or wrongly, everybody was quite astonished. Nobody had any inclination that there was anything going on in that regard in the school. I wouldn't have expected it from clergy at that time either, although we know differently now. Whether they were under the influence of alcohol, I don't know. The brothers did like a dram at night. They called it a night cap. Occasionally, if I were there, they would ask if I wanted to stop over for a wee

night cap. I was driving and needed to get home so I never did. If I had any suspicion that there was any abuse going on at the school, I would tell you.

78. At that time, the word and concept of abuse was never used or heard. The pendulum has now swung the other way. Many teachers would be prosecuted under today's attitude for what was then deemed as normal behaviour, rightly or wrongly. When I started teaching in 1971, most teachers gave the strap for severe misdemeanours and most teachers gave out lines and shouted at children if they misbehaved. You can't do that now, but that's the way it was in those days and you just conformed to the norm. In times gone by, I used the strap on children in day school. I'd never do it now. You did it because that was the way the punishment system was, that's what you were expected to do to establish your authority. Maybe in retrospect, that was the wrong method.
79. There are schools of thought that suggest Brother Kelly and Farrell didn't do what they were legally accused of doing, although the courts found them guilty. That's not for me to decide. Some of the other witnesses at the court proceedings just couldn't believe that they could have perpetrated such offences.

Leaving St. Ninian's

80. Some children moved on from St. Ninian's for various reasons, but not many did. As far as I'm aware, no follow-up ensued, especially after the school closed down. Most went to other educational establishments. Of the 807 boys who passed through the portals of St. Ninian's over a period of 33 years, we know very little of what befell them because there was no after-care provision. In the same time that I was there, not a lot was done to prepare children for moving on. Presumably, it would have been discussed with families and the resident and field social workers. I wasn't privy to that. I don't know how much notice the boys got, but they would have been aware of the discussions. I would just be told that a boy was leaving and going to a different place. I believe that many boys were directed towards the forces.

81. I learned that the school was going to close about four or five months before it was scheduled to do so. I was a bit annoyed. I'd heard that they knew the school would close eventually, but they still appointed me. I thought that was a bit naughty. We were encouraged by the headmaster to write to the Bishop, Archbishop and even the Pope himself, explaining that the school was doing a wonderful job in an area of education that was the ethos of the Christian Brothers.
82. The Christian Brothers were founded in Ireland by Edmund Ignatius Rice, a very wealthy philanthropist. He was aware of the number of children who were receiving no education and were not being looked after. He founded schools to look after them. The schools spread from Ireland to England. A lot of those schools weren't doing the job that the founder had intended. They had become grammar schools along the way and were fee-paying. There was one in Edinburgh called Scotus Academy. It was set up by Archbishop Gray, who later became Cardinal. A lot of the brothers felt that St. Ninian's was really doing the work that the founder had intended.
83. The pupils were gradually farmed out to alternative, suitable placements. I left because the school closed. The Provincial of the Christian Brothers who decided to close the school was Brother Coffey. The reason provided was that the number of applicants to the Order was diminishing quite rapidly. Those brothers that were left in the Order were not particularly interested in the kind of educational establishment that St. Ninian's was. They had become used to a different style of teaching and the elite, well-run, well-disciplined, well-ordered grammar schools. They found it challenging to be in a school where the children had special needs. That was ironic because that's what the Christian Brothers were originally trained to do. Some brothers got a bit of a culture shock when they came to St. Ninian's. Additionally, there had been a change in social work policy towards children being placed in their environment rather than being incarcerated in a residential establishment.

Reporting of Abuse

84. Recent reports of sexual abuse ended in a court case. Brother Kelly and Brother Farrell were prosecuted and jailed. I gave a statement to the police. The police came and assured me that it was a fact. They asked what my experience was at St. Ninian's and whether I'd witnessed or was aware of any abuse. Nobody else saw it either. When I was at court, I had a chat with Margaret Nicol. She gave evidence before I did. She said she wasn't aware of any abuse. The other two ladies at court said it was a shock to them as well. They all said they had never heard of or witnessed any abuse at the school. I travelled to court with Mrs Hutton, the laundress. She said the boys would sometimes come into the laundry for a chat, but she nothing was ever reported to her. That was why it was a bit of a shock to people who knew the school or worked there.
85. I was called as a witness for the Crown. Lord Matthews heard the case. The advocates asked general questions. Most of them were representing the Brothers. I was asked things like whether I would agree that the boys were well looked after. I was asked to read several pages of the school Review and whether things stated there were true. I just replied yes or no.
86. They were trying to get me agree that the Brothers were doing a wonderful job and that the children were happy and well looked after, and there was no room for complaint. I thought they were. I thought the Brothers were committed and running a good regime. They were firm but fair. They had a sense of humour as well. I thought they looked after the material and spiritual needs of the boys well.
87. If I had had any concerns about abuse at the school, I would have raised it with a Brother or the headmaster. There was no formal complaints procedure as far as I'm aware.

Access to the archives of the Christian Brothers

88. I had an article published about the Christian Brothers in [REDACTED] which I have provided to the Inquiry. I had complete access to the Christian Brothers' archives in Liverpool, Altrincham and Birkenhead. The main archive was at the headquarters of the Christian Brothers in Woodeaves, Altrincham. I also had access to various Brothers, including Brother [REDACTED] MIC [REDACTED], a [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] of one the Christian Brothers' Secondary Schools in England. Brother [REDACTED] MIC [REDACTED] is now deceased. He was very helpful. He procured a number of relevant documents, including those relating to the school at Falkland. They were correspondence documents. They were quite historic. There were no records relating to the pupils, which I thought was strange.
89. The Brothers had a manual for the use of corporal punishment in general. I saw it referenced in one of the archives, but it mainly pertained to the schools in Ireland. To my knowledge, they didn't have the manual available in St. Ninian's.

Lessons to be Learned

90. I think that teaching in residential schools was good for me because I learned lessons in personal tolerance. I saw another side of life. I also saw some of the difficulties that the children encountered in their home and social lives, which helped me to understand why some of the children behaved in the way that they did.
91. I think that the Christian Brothers did a very good job. I think that the children had a consistency in discipline and were made to think about the consequences of their actions. In those days, especially in the Catholic Church, people didn't think they would be believed if they made an allegation against the clergy. If the children had had the opportunity to be more open and it hadn't been taboo, it would have been better for them.

92. 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.

MKF

Signed..

Dated... 05/04/2019