

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KJJ

Support person present: No

1. My name is KJJ. My date of birth is 1955. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to Boarding School

2. I resided in Edinburgh and attended a local nursery school. I went to Edinburgh Academy for my first year of primary school in or around 1961 when I was approximately five years old. I began boarding at the Academy in or around 1966 when I was approximately nine years old.

Edinburgh Academy

General Routine

3. In the boarding houses, everything ran on bells. There was a bell to wake up, a bell to get up, and a bell to leave the house. All our meals were provided in the prep school opposite the end of the road where the boarding houses were located. The food was usually terrible and in fairly limited supply. One tea, I remember I was served five chips which even the housemaster thought was mean. After breakfast we went back to the house, collected our school bag, and then walked to school. The prep school was

around a five or six minute walk from the boarding houses and the upper school was approximately 30 minutes' walk.

Schooling

4. In general, the level of teaching at Edinburgh Academy seemed average compared to my friends at other schools. The school day consisted of an assembly every morning, classes, morning break, lunch break and concluded at 3:00 or 3:30 pm. In the upper school, we had Combined Cadet Force on a Monday afternoon. Each weekday, we would do homework, or prep as it was called, in the boarding house either before and/or after tea. Prep was supervised by the housemaster or house tutor.
5. At the Upper School, games were generally on a Tuesday and Thursday after school and involved playing either cricket or rugby, which I was never very keen on. On a Friday afternoon in the Upper School boys could take part in pursuits. There was a large choice of things to do. It could be sporting things or extra academic classes. I spent most years of pursuits doing printing. Then, on a Friday one could stay at the Upper School to have tea if one wished to attend some school society meetings afterwards, such as debating. The downside of staying late after school was the risk of being attacked by boys who did not attend Edinburgh Academy, on the way back to the boarding house in the dark. School staff were aware of this but offered nothing proactive to prevent it.
6. At the weekends, Saturday mornings were dedicated to school sports teams matches. Those students who excelled at school sports were generally favoured by the school. If as a boarder was not involved in school sports, they were sent on a cross-country run. During the rugby season, we had to attend first XV matches on Saturday afternoons, unless they were particularly far away. On a Saturday evening, we could watch TV or play games in the boarding house. On a Sunday, we got up thirty minutes later, had breakfast, wrote our letters to family while supervised by the housemaster or house tutor and then attended church. Sunday afternoons were free time. On Saturday mornings one could request permission to walk to Goldenacre from the boarding houses to go to the sweet shop and the newsagent. In the last couple of

years as a boarder one could request leave to go into central Edinburgh for a specific reason on a Saturday morning if one was not involved in school sports teams. I would often go to the Central Library. The school occasionally organised a day or half day trips to somewhere around Edinburgh, but I tended to avoid these. One of my classmates in the prep school died on one of these when he apparently fell over an edge in the hills. This tragedy passed as though it was a seemingly unremarkable event.

7. We were allowed days out, which broke the monotony and isolation of the boarding houses, but they felt few and far between. On each side of half term, there was one whole Sunday out after breakfast and one half day out after church. A parent or guardian had to write a letter to the housemaster the week before a proposed day out, and the student had to attend the housemaster in their study on a Thursday evening to obtain permission to go on the day out. Punishments sometimes included cancelling days out. On one occasion everybody's day out was significantly shortened because the housemaster could not discover who had been responsible for some bad behaviour. On that occasion my mother refused to comply with the housemaster's demand, and I was returned to the house at the normal time.

Pastoral care

8. The level of pastoral care provided by the Academy was minimal. That said, in Mackenzie House, the housemasters, [REDACTED] and later ICG [REDACTED], along with their wives, looked after the boys albeit under a strict regime of discipline and corporal punishment.
9. Given the atmosphere and culture at the Academy when I attended the school, better pastoral care may well have been helpful in some circumstances.

Atmosphere and Culture at Edinburgh Academy

10. One of the most important things to discuss about Edinburgh Academy is the culture and atmosphere of the school when I was a student there. It harped back to preparing young men for the British Empire. The school culture valued secrecy and isolation, corporal punishment and fear, and included normalising abusive behaviour by its staff, bullying and victim blaming from an early age.
11. One's value of worth as a boy was intimately linked to secrecy. This secrecy took various forms starting with the isolation of boarders. In particular, in the case of the boarders, we were denied access to the outside world unless we had permission to leave for a specific reason. We were in the boarding house, at school and then back to the boarding house again where I had a sense of abandonment by the world outside. We had to wear our school uniform all the time, including evenings and weekends. That felt part of the process of isolation. One could not escape into the outside world easily since we were marked by wearing our school uniform and those who did run away were always caught and brought back again. Communication with those outside our microcosm had to be by letter or sending a message covertly via a willing day boy. The effect of isolation was to give boys the school as their only frame of reference of normality.
12. Next, secrecy extended to censorship. There was a general unwritten rule that one did not tell one's parents anything not acceptable to the school. I did later on, but I think I was probably exceptional in this regard. It was as if one had to side with the school against those external to it. Starting in Mackenzie House, it was made clear that letters written on Sunday morning would be censored by the housemaster before they were sent out. We were instructed that the letters had to be two sides and contain appropriate information. They had to be submitted to the housemaster in an unsealed envelope which was collected at the end of the letter writing period before church. I do not know whether anybody was given letters back to rewrite, but I can tell you that I and other boys were very careful what we wrote about. I recall saying, in my very first letter home, that I was having a very good time which was absolutely untrue: I was

homesick, made worse by being told that a first day out was not allowed until six weeks into term.

13. It did not matter whether letters were actually censored or not because this was all part of the culture of fear of reprisal behind which secrecy was protected. As I got older, I reached an age where I could write an uncensored letter. I often did write a letter home, during the week, and drop it in the post box which I passed on the way to school. Even then I would never have put anything in a letter that criticised the school. I would never have dreamt of it. There was a constant niggling instilled at the back of my mind that the school might find out and retaliate.
14. As if to reinforce the school values, sometimes a film was shown at the prep school for the boarders on a Saturday evening. These commonly featured heroic war films including escapes from prisoner of war camps which felt especially pertinent.
15. I also recall in my first year at Mackenzie House, that the new headmaster of the prep school wanted to make a movie with some of the boarders over some weekend afternoons. I was asked to join the cast, the reason for which I do not know. The film was to be entitled 'Clyping Doesn't Pay' and strongly reinforced the dire consequences of complaining to authority. The final cut was shown to other boarders.
16. It is important to understand that the isolation and grooming of boys started very young and it continued to be reinforced throughout school. Not only were the children at the Academy groomed, but the parents were groomed too. I started boarding at the beginning of the autumn term. Not long after I started boarding, there was a 'parents at home' meeting at the school to review academic progress. Boys did not attend. My mother did attend and was humiliated. She frequently told the story of going to the meeting and being asked whose parent she was. When she responded, the teacher remarked 'oh he's awful, he smells'. From the stories my mother told, the sort of things that were said about boys at these meetings were designed to groom the parents to normalise the corporal punishments that were being used within the school. This likely also helped to normalise the child abuse too.

Discipline – Corporal Punishment

17. There was a spectrum of teaching staff at the Academy. There were the teaching staff who used corporal punishment too readily. Then, there were staff who would not have lifted their hand or hit a child in a month of Sundays. Those in between would use corporal punishment for what was viewed, at that time, for appropriate purposes. The level of corporal punishment varied, but there was enough of a culture amongst the teaching staff, for even those who refrained, to stand together and let excessive use of corporal punishment take place.
18. In the Upper School, Senior Ephors were allowed to beat other boys.
19. This punishment, from my perspective, was part of the development, along with bullying, which led to normalising of violence and abusive behaviour. Punishment by the teaching staff who delivered it liberally was meted out unpredictably, frequently for minor transgressions, as well as those more serious. The clachan, tawse and not uncommonly, a ruler across the knuckles were used. Punishment in this form could and would occur unpredictably and frequently with certain members of staff, some of whom I am sure are well known to the Inquiry.
20. The corporal punishment that was apportioned was frequently disproportionate to the offending behaviour. Any degree of misbehaviour in the eyes of some school staff seemed to deserve catastrophic consequences. The effect of that was that whether a transgression was minor or major, much the same punishment was meted out. That further enhanced the effect of not knowing when corporal punishment was going to come one's way. I think this is important because the business of catastrophising something that is minor would, I am sure, have significant and long lasting effects on how one behaves and reacts to situations later in life.
21. What was particularly concerning and frightening, was that this corporal punishment sometimes extended to academic work. We know, and I don't believe it would have been a revelation then, that teaching by fear is the best way to ensure that students

stop learning. So, by having some boys in a state of fear, not knowing if or when they would be beaten for academic work, of course had a detrimental effect on learning. My academic performance plummeted when I started boarding and did not recover until I was able to work more independently after 'O' levels.

22. The regime of punishment implemented at Edinburgh Academy probably led children to accept abuse much more readily. There can be a fine line between what is punishment and what is abuse. Because we simply could not always discern between the two, this may ultimately have facilitated abuse by school staff.

Bullying

23. Edinburgh Academy did not seem to proactively prevent bullying and bullies did not generally seem to be systematically sought out and punished proportionately. The staff must have been unwilling to acknowledge it.
24. I believe that boys were encouraged to bully each other by the atmosphere of fear and punishment within the school. They were being punished or physically hit under the excuse of punishment by some of the teachers. Not surprisingly, they would go on and replicate the behaviour on their peers. I think that this bullying led to boys becoming acclimatised to lawless violence in the school. Some of the day boys suffered from this too but, of course, this was amplified when boys were shut up together in a boarding house. In the boarding house, violence self-replicated quickly.
25. Fagging existed in the senior boarding houses when I was there.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy

26. I recall discussing on many occasions my experience at Edinburgh Academy with one of my good friends who attended Cargilfield and Rugby schools. The two schools were

worlds apart and my friend was surprised to hear what was going on at Edinburgh Academy. Friends attending other schools such as Heriots confirmed that such violence and abuse just did not happen at their schools. I also had a number of friends who were day boys and who, by chance, avoided contact with abusive staff. They could as well have been at a different school.

Mr IDP [REDACTED] – Gym Master

27. A good example of the school's culture of normalising inappropriate behaviour of its staff occurred when I was in the prep school during an encounter with the gym master. I think his name was Mr IDP [REDACTED]. I would have been between the ages of eight and ten. This was the first year we were required to change for gym and we had been supplied with gym shorts. Mr IDP [REDACTED] instructed us, in a slow and deliberate fashion, to remove each item of clothing, in a specific order, until we had no clothes on. He then instructed us to put our shorts on. He lined us up and proceeded to go along the line pulling some boys shorts open on the pretence that he was checking to ensure we were not wearing underwear. I thought that was a bit peculiar and so did other boys, but we did not comprehend its seriousness. We chatted about it afterwards, but as far as I am aware, no one reported it.

Dundas House - Hamish Dawson

28. The major thing I would like to draw to the attention of the Inquiry was the complete failure of the school to act upon evidence of the abuse in Dundas House. When I began boarding at the age of around eight or nine, I was initially placed in Mackenzie House which was the junior house. To transition to one of the senior houses, one always went via Dundas House which was an intermediate house. When I was at the school, one was required to stay in Dundas house for three terms which equated to one year.

29. The transition from Mackenzie House to Dundas house was a leap into cruelty. The housemaster, Hamish Dawson ruled by generating an atmosphere of fear of punishment and of what would happen to anyone he chose to abuse.
30. In Dundas House, the culture of child abuse included humiliation. An example of this was Hamish Dawson beating a boy publicly in front of his peers. It was always very carefully engineered by him to ensure that the other boys turned on the victim, not the member of staff. What this achieved was undermining of self-respect and self-confidence of the boys. It was then repeated on multiple occasions. That is the sort of abuse I witnessed, and which horrified me. The other aspect of this was that nobody in authority seemed concerned about it and this reinforced the appalling sense of our abandonment and betrayal by the school. This necessitated boys to adopt a self-protective behaviour according to their personality. Some became quiet and others became major rebels. My response to this abusive behaviour was to maintain a low profile. My aim was not to be noticed and I think I partially succeeded at that.
31. During my time in Dundas House, the behaviour that made me most uncomfortable was less the beatings that were carried out but more that Hamish Dawson would come into the dormitory in the evening at bedtime, select a boy, sit down on their bed and tickle them. I do not recall whether it happened to me or not. That may seem like an entirely innocent act, but there was something about the man and his predatory behaviour that seemed strange to me. In addition, boys within the house told each other of worse abusive incidents. I have no reason to doubt the veracity of what I was told. The behaviour of Hamish Dawson towards the boys simply was not normal and it edged to becoming normalised as time passed.
32. In the lead up to transitioning to Dundas House, there was anticipation of what one was going to meet there. At least the last year of boys in Mackenzie House knew exactly what went on in Dundas House. In fact, boys all over the school knew what went on. If many of the boys knew it, I find it very hard to believe that observant members of staff were not aware of the abuse in Dundas House and, if they acted on it, why the school did nothing to arrest it instantly.

Reporting of abuse whilst at Edinburgh Academy

33. Having boarded in Dundas House for one or two terms, I returned home for the holidays faced with returning there when the holidays were over. I told my mother about the cruelty and frightening behaviour of Hamish Dawson at Dundas House almost as soon as I got home. I had been to stay, during the school holidays, at houses of friends and even gone on holiday with them. None of their parents behaved in that sort of way, so I was aware that what was going on in Dundas House was highly abnormal.
34. When I told my mother in some detail what had happened at Dundas House, she took immediate action and telephoned the school to arrange an appointment with the Rector who, at that time, was ICH [REDACTED]. A meeting was arranged within two days. She went to the meeting, and she came back home remarkably soon. She reported to me that she had started to explain her serious concerns about Hamish Dawson to the Rector and he cut her off. He lifted the telephone, and while my mother waited, arranged for my immediate transfer to a senior boarding house and then concluded the meeting. This premature transfer between boarding houses was very exceptional since a one year stay in Dundas House was not open to negotiation. The whole meeting was short, but long enough for my mother to realise that ICH [REDACTED] knew exactly what was going on with Hamish Dawson.
35. I started the next term in Jeffrey House but absolutely nothing happened at the school as far as my mother or I were aware to address the concerns about which my mother had informed the Rector; and the Rector never provided any further follow-up information to her. Indeed, I understand Hamish Dawson was in fact subsequently promoted to a bigger, senior boarding house. This action seemed to be entirely consistent with the abusive culture at Edinburgh Academy at the time. I think the indifference of the school and its choice to ignore such malevolent and abusive behaviour on the part of its staff is unforgivable. Child abuse is terrible enough, but to positively propagate it and not take action to halt it immediately is immoral, ugly and utterly unacceptable.

36. My mother told friends, some with children at Edinburgh Academy, this story in the same detail, not infrequently in front of me. These friends included Edinburgh lawyers, doctors, teachers and their families. Some were later able to confirm that they remembered being told about this. Those who were told may have included members of the Edinburgh Academy Court of Directors.
37. When an abusive situation arose, the first thought was to keep it secret. If one had wanted to seek the help of a member of staff, there seemed to be nobody who could be trusted. Part of the reason for that was that complainants were subject to victim blaming. Another factor was that the teaching staff changed from year to year as one moved through the school, so there was no one consistent to follow any concerns through. From my point of view, the school staff, the good and the bad, seemed to stand together.

Leaving Edinburgh Academy

38. My academic work declined significantly when I became a boarder, as I have mentioned previously. I only started to regain my academic confidence after 'O' levels and I recognised the best plan was to work night and day to pass the last set of exams with good grades, despite the school advising my mother that my chance of achieving that was uncertain.

Life after being at Edinburgh Academy

39. After leaving Edinburgh Academy, I went on to the university of my choice and had a successful career, beyond what I was led to expect I could achieve by the school.

Reporting of abuse after leaving Edinburgh Academy

40. I considered making a complaint about Edinburgh Academy when I was at university, but I simply did not know how to go about it without becoming directly involved with the school. I was also well aware of the potential consequences of making such a complaint and I was very strongly discouraged from doing so by those around me. Had I known, or appreciated, that I could just go to the police without involving anybody else, that is very probably what I would have done.
41. Looking back on it now, it seemed to me that we lived in a society where it was not done to complain, and whistleblowers would suffer retribution. There was apparently no duty to stop child abuse. If it was not your business, you just kept out of it. Perhaps that society even believed that what I have described was good experience for life.

General Observations

42. Based upon evidence I have gathered, I believe that in the [REDACTED] 1960s the Rector recognised but ignored child abuse, and this very likely led to more boys being abused. The school normalised child abuse and betrayed its pupils.
43. I have not been back to the school since I left. Despite being a boarder during the years when it is now clear abuse was rife, and thus potentially affected by abusive staff, Edinburgh Academy has not contacted me directly about this. I think that the school should have personally written to all the boys in the years affected, saying 'we acknowledge this is what happened, we're very sorry for what happened, we should never have ignored child abuse when we were told about it, it should never have been allowed to happen in the first place'. For me this would have suggested that the school had indeed fully acknowledged this sad chapter in its history.

Impact

44. I think my experience at Edinburgh Academy has had a negative impact on many aspects of my life.

Hopes for the Inquiry

45. The only purpose in me coming forward to the Inquiry is to try to contribute constructively to preventing child abuse in future. I hope the Inquiry is successful in achieving its aims, and in particular, ensuring that the culture at Edinburgh Academy has completely changed for the better, and that robust safeguards are in place that will never allow any report of child abuse to be ignored by the school again.
46. A recommendation that I think should be seriously considered is that the school admit the child abuse that took place, and its failure to put a stop to it when it was told about it, to all the people who were at the school at the time, by writing to them personally.
47. I would like Edinburgh Academy to make a substantial contribution on behalf of those affected by its gross child abuse to a charity whose mission is to prevent child abuse and help those who have been abused.
48. I have no objection to my witness statement being published anonymously as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..........

Dated.....29 March 2024.....