

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QTL

1. My name is QTL. My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was educated at primary and secondary level in Ireland. I then attended the University of Kent in Canterbury from 1983 to 1986 where I obtained a 2:1 in a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree. I completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Education in at Loughborough University from 1986 to 1987.
3. I was employed at Woldingham School from 1987 until 1991 when I left following the birth of my first son. I worked as a self-employed intermittently from 1992 to 2005 and I taught at in Hampshire from 2000 to 2003. I moved to Edinburgh in 2003 when I worked as a supply teacher at from September 2004 until July 2005. I joined the teaching staff at Merchiston Castle School in August 2005 and have been employed there until my recent redundancy.

Employment with Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh

4. I joined the school as the primary classroom teacher of a Junior 4 class and as a House Tutor, having one night a week duty in the junior boarding house which was called Pringle House. In August 2008 I was promoted to responsible for the daily running of Junior 4 up to the first form in Pringle House. In

August 2012 I was promoted to SNR [REDACTED] a position I took over from [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

5. In August 2013 I took over the position of Pringle Housemaster, responsible for the care of the junior boarders. In 2019 I moved from the role of Pringle House Housemaster to [REDACTED] and retained my responsibilities as SNR [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED], House Tutor, classroom teacher role and member of the Pupil Support Leadership Team.

Recruitment Process

6. There was a rigorous and thorough interview process through all appointments including class teaching, panel/Head of Department/pupil interviews, presentations, General Teaching Council of Scotland registration, and a Return to Teaching course at Moray House ahead of starting teaching in 2005 as I was new to the Scottish teaching system. References were collected from previous employers, I passed my initial probation period and I had an annual review together with regular training and meetings.

Line Managers

7. From 2005 to 2008 my line manager was Fiona Trotter (nee MacMillan). The Heads of Department met and worked with me daily. There were lesson observations and I had an annual review.
8. From 2008 until 2012 my line manager was Peter Hall, who was Head of Juniors. We met daily, we had weekly meetings and I had annual appraisals and reviews. From 2012 until 2014 it was Peter Hall, who was now Senior Deputy Head. We interacted daily, we had weekly meetings and I continued to have annual appraisals and reviews.
9. From 2014 to 2018 my line manager was Andrew Hunter, who was Merchiston Headmaster, together with Peter Hall and Alan Johnston who were Senior Deputy

Heads. We interacted and communicated daily and we had meetings three to five times a week. I had regular reviews together with an annual review and appraisal.

10. From 2018 to August 2020 my line manager was Jonathan Anderson, Headmaster, and Alan Johnston, Senior Deputy Headmaster. We had daily communication and meetings together with reviews and monitoring.
11. I have always felt supported, monitored and engaged with line managers and been able to access them daily for discussions and professional engagement. There has always been a culture of professional engagement and working at Merchiston.

Training

12. Training was regular and ongoing during my time at Merchiston. It started with the Return to Teaching course in 2005 and has included training/talks/courses on/in Child Safeguarding and Wellbeing; Child Protection; Getting It Right For Every Child; SHANARRI; NSPCC Workshop; Equalities Seminar; WRAP Prevent training course; GDPR; Health and Safety; Fire; Internet; Abuse; Grooming; trips/tours; Restorative Behaviour Management; First Aid; Medical; Teach Share; Leadership; Classroom Management; Mental Health; and also encouraged me to travel to and take courses including International Boys' School Coalition conferences and speaking on InterDisciplinary Learning in Melbourne; attend Junior Heads' Conference and travel to China as part of the MIS development.

Policy

13. As Class Teacher, Head of Department, House Tutor, Housemaster and SNR SNR I was always included and involved in policy development, review and implementation. Areas of interest might be training, recruitment of staff, child protection, requirement for qualifications, staff appraisal, complaints procedure, discipline of children, disciplinary process for dealing with complaints and allegations against staff, whistleblowing, record-keeping, staff appraisals and regular updates.

Policy Changes over time

14. There was a focus from 2013 onwards after the death of James Rainy Brown on rigorous checking of Child Protection and Wellbeing policies. Child Protection and Wellbeing was always a focus but it was rightly reviewed and increased after 2013. The Allegations of Abuse Policy 2015-2016 was discussed in draft form. There were changes made to the Child Protection Policy which were ongoing in 2015.
15. There was restorative addition to the Discipline Policy 2015 including training for staff. I was involved in the administration of the training. Prior to that the main discipline policy was punitive. Restorative practice is a positive and effective method of learning self-discipline and understanding the impact of our behaviour on others. It refers to relationship based resolution, with awareness of error and poor decisions, recognition, acceptance and willingness to heal and make good, understanding the impact on others.
16. It helps pupils to resolve disagreements, take ownership of their behaviour, and demonstrate empathy. It has a longer term positive impact on behaviour. It takes time and commitment from all and engages all affected. This policy was always shared and explained to the boys, during assemblies, meetings and with examples to help guide them.
17. A Whistleblowing policy was introduced in 2015 and was updated and reviewed in 2019 with the addition of a Whistleblowing Governor. Prior to that the Chairman was contacted if there was an issue.

Strategic planning

18. I was involved in school improvement since joining the school. Pupil wellbeing and Child Protection was always discussed and keeping boys safe from abuse was and continued to be a key school focus. After the death of James Rainy Brown the school and regulator's focus was very much on Child Protection and wellbeing and this was

constantly under review. I was the person who raised the issues internally and I was right to do so having subsequently completed lots of training on grooming.

Other staff

19. As Housemaster and SNR [REDACTED] I mentored and was line manager to the following people in their roles as teachers, tutors, graduate assistants, housemothers, assistant housemasters and the current Housemaster, resident and non-resident:

Pat Wearmouth who was part time Pringle Housemother; Anne Kelly who was Pringle Housemother; Clare Nugent who was Pringle Housemother and Tutor; Ruth MacLennan who was Pringle Housemother and Housemaster; Michael Boyd who was Primary Teacher, Tutor and Assistant Housemaster; Martin Harkins who was Primary Teacher, Tutor and Assistant Housemaster; Ruth Foster who was Primary Teacher and Tutor; Archie Millar who was Resident Graduate Assistant; Nick Wright who was Resident Graduate Assistant; Katie Johnson who was Resident Graduate Assistant; Jennifer McNaught who was Resident Graduate Assistant; Alexandra Torrance who was Primary Teacher and Tutor; Peter Kiln who was Primary Teacher and Tutor; James Rainy Brown who was House Tutor; DRW [REDACTED] who was House Tutor; Juliet Vaughan who was House Tutor; Stephen Dennis who was House Tutor; Jason Cordingley who was House Tutor; Niall McWilliam who was House Tutor; Camilla Smith who was House Tutor; Dale Cartwright who was House Tutor; David Thomson who was House Tutor; Richard Lucas who was House Tutor; Roddy Deans who was House Tutor; Kiran Gill who was House Tutor; Rory McCann who was House Tutor; Jackie Ghazal who was House Tutor; David Farquharson who was House Tutor; Carol Sharp who was House Tutor.

Recruitment of staff

20. I was involved in the recruitment of staff. As such I was aware that vacancies were advertised both internally and externally and application forms were completed with personal statements. A disclosure statement which required disclosure of any internal connections was needed. A shortlist was collated with the relevant staff involved and there was an interview with confirmation of any Disclosure. Interviews always included a safeguarding Child Protection situation. References were collected and there was an induction for new staff and ongoing mentoring. There was regular Professional Review and Development of staff.

21. References were always requested and gathered through the Headmaster's office. A phone call was made to the referee and written references requested to follow. These were obtained ahead of employment. Any reference was expected to cover evidence of employment, timescales, experience, details of responsibilities, suitability of post and any concerns or investigations.

Training of staff

22. I was involved in staff training as part of supporting and mentoring staff during and throughout their probation period, their induction process, their observation process, Continuing Professional Development requests and contributions to In-service provision which included GIRFEC, Shanarri and Restorative teaching methods for boys and training.

23. All staff attended and there was a record kept of attendance at relevant In-service training sessions, the programmes related to subjects listed previously. Staff were also encouraged to follow CPD development and supported to do so. My General Teaching Council of Scotland recordings also. All staff completed In-service training with confidence ratings.

Supervision/staff appraisal / staff evaluation

24. I was involved in annual Tutor reviews which included feedback on performance, interactions, strengths and areas for improvement, and meetings with relevant staff. I gathered feedback from other staff and boys through questionnaires and feedback forms. As Housemaster I devised guidelines through consultation and collaboration for safe supervision and support. As part of the Professional Review and Development process all records were in staff files.

Living arrangements

25. From 2005 to 2013 I lived off campus in my family home. From 2013 to 2019 when I was Housemaster of Pringle House I lived in a flat with a link door within the boarding house, as the boys were in my care. I would not have done anything to impact the safety, privacy and wellbeing of the boys, a role I took incredibly seriously. Safety was priority, and privacy was key for the boys. I would never interrupt a phone call or barge into their rooms. I would tell them to shower and never subsequently enter the shower room. There was an intercom system so I could tell them that they had five minutes to finish.
26. I was always aware of the need to allow the boys space, built into the day for showers and changing, phone calls etcetera, and simply time to be! If I ever needed to enter, I would announce in advance, knock on the door and await response. Safety came first so if there was an emergency in the shower or bathroom I would need to go in but I would knock beforehand and say they had to be decent. I interacted as a professional caregiver with a sense of love and care for the boys and I never overstepped the mark but also being there when they needed, being aware, caring, attentive....as any parent would expect of me!
27. Since 2019 I lived in [REDACTED] which was a separate cottage [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the boarding house.

28. The Housemother and the Assistant Housemaster lived in a flat upstairs in Pringle House. The Graduate Assistant lived in a flat at the other end of the boarding house. The residents' role and accommodation was a key element of care of the junior boarders. Other staff lived in staff houses situated around the campus and in other boarding houses.
29. All staff on duty in the house had access to the children's residential area as part of caring for boarders aged seven to thirteen together with domestic staff for daily cleaning.

Culture within Merchiston Castle School

30. Merchiston was a happy, safe family community providing home from home for boarders in a caring and nurturing environment. There were close links between home and school with regular visits from parents and family and close communication.
31. Fagging did absolutely not exist.

Discipline and punishment

32. There was a School Policy on Behaviour Management in place and this was discussed with the children. The policy was also shared with parents. Teaching staff and staff with wellbeing training used the school staged intervention model as part of the behaviour policy. Discipline matters were referred along a line of responsibility in line with the policy. The staged intervention model has developed over time and in line with good practice.
33. There has always been a policy which has been included in a booklet for staff, parents and boys. This policy has been shared with staff and parents and discussed with the boys. Staff training was regular and updated. The move to more restorative practice was supported by training and discussion. Online records of interactions and

applications were kept. We communicated with parents and they were a necessary part of the process.

34. In recent years each Personal and Social Health Education programme began with a session covering this policy with the boys. Boys contributed to and were involved in the development of the Pupil Charter and the Anti Bullying policy within the school. The pupil voice became strong. I cannot confirm why or when this policy was implemented and at whose instigation as I am no longer working at Merchiston Castle School and I do not have access to my paperwork.
35. Senior boys were not responsible for issuing any punishments. They shared concerns and sought the support of a staff member. They gave gentle reminders of expectations. A gentle reminder might be to a boy making a poor choice, such as running in the house (safety), unsettled in prep (disturbing others), and would be a helpful comment to remind them of expectations. 'Is that a good decision?' 'Please think about impact on others' 'Be careful there, you may hurt yourself or someone else' 'We don't say things like that'. They would report to a member of staff if things did not settle down. In the past I believe they could issue Blue Papers which were written sides but this was not the practice in my time.

Day to day running of the school

36. As [REDACTED] in the Pringle Centre from 2008 to 2014 I managed the day to day routine, schedule and timetable, arranged trips and activities, events and parent meetings.
37. As ^{SNR} [REDACTED] since 2012 I was responsible for overseeing the safety, health and wellbeing of all the boys and staff in the junior school in line with whole school policy. I was part of the team who devised daily routines, schedules, timetables, trips and activities.

38. As Housemaster from 2013 to 2019 I was responsible for the safety, health and wellbeing of the boys in the boarding house, managing their daily routine and schedules and ensuring policies were in place and followed.
39. I am confident that procedures were in place to protect the boys and that any concerns were immediately reported and taken seriously. There was very much a culture of openness and discussion with boys' wellbeing the first discussion point in any meeting. During my time at the school the boys had procedures to follow and in my experience they are confident to come forward.

Concerns about the school

40. After the suicide of James Rainy Brown in 2013 the school was closely inspected and worked closely with the Care Inspectorate and Police Scotland to ensure all information was shared and improvements made in consultation with the inspectorate. Concerns were immediately shared with parents through school communication and inspection reports. The Headmaster communicated with current and former pupils and their parents with openness stating a desire to work together and share information.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

41. The procedure is contained within the policy booklet which is shared with and available to all associated with the school. There are displays of 'who to go to' on posters and statements around the school and the boys are reminded of this. The Pupil Support Leadership Team addresses the boys in assemblies to reiterate the importance of sharing concerns and reporting. There is regular communication with the boys and their parents about concerns and their complaints which are recorded on file.

Trusted adult/confidante

42. All boys were made aware that all teachers are there to support and that they can approach any. All boys were encouraged to identify a specific adult or teacher they would go to and they were confident to do so. There are termly reminders and PSHE sessions on keeping safe and Wellbeing questionnaires have supported the school supporting boys.
43. In recent years the school developed a Pupil Support Leadership Team, and also the Child Protection team, with specific responsibilities for overseeing the care and wellbeing of all the boys, strengthening the school's provision of support and monitoring. This team addressed the boys and photographs were shared widely with contact details so that boys could recognise and make contact. The addition of a school counsellor was a very positive addition to support for the boys in this area.
44. I recall use of the counsellor being in place for many years supporting many boys. Before this role the school also had The Place To Be active in school. That was more than ten years ago. This subject matter was also further developed within the PSHE programme and discussed regularly with the boys. Boys spoke openly with staff if concerned about anything at all. I can only speak from experience as boys I taught spoke to me. However, it is true to say that I cannot state that all boys would do so, as one can ever state this.
45. We always discussed this topic with the boys and encouraged them to share, and they were reminded of the process. Each boy was encouraged to have at least one named person at school that they would feel comfortable and confident to speak with. As one would expect this is an area of continued development in a school setting.

Abuse

46. All staff understood the term and definition of abuse in relation to the boys in their care. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. A person may abuse

or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to prevent, harm to the child. The Allegations of Abuse Against Staff policy clearly sets out what constitutes abuse. These are in line with Edinburgh and Lothian Inter Agency CP procedures 2015 and the school adopted that definition of abuse. The types of abuse are: Physical abuse; Emotional abuse including verbal, bullying, name calling, shouting etc.; Sexual abuse; Neglect.

47. The definition was communicated and explained through policies and In-service training with all staff. All staff were very clear on the types of abuse and their role as care givers. The Allegations of Abuse Against Staff policy was added in 2015. Prior to this as a member of staff one reported and shared any concern one had with senior management. As a member of staff prior to 2015 if I had an issue I would report any concerns to my line manager. I was uncomfortable with the way RCQ RCQ dressed and I raised that. I think it was a policy as it was discussed at meetings and you knew who to go to but it was clearer after 2015.

Child protection arrangements

48. Child Protection was a key topic addressed at each Inset Training session and also all team meetings. We had regular visiting speakers on many aspects of keeping children safe such as workshops and seminars on grooming, prevent, drugs, bullying, abuse etc. All staff in school were trained as we expected all adults in school to take a role and responsibility for protecting the boys in our care. Throughout my time at Merchiston Castle School there was always training in this area and all teaching and boarding, medical staff were aware. More recently this included every member of the community, grounds staff, catering and domestic teams etcetera but I am not sure of the date when this commenced. All staff are now together for these meetings but when I first started these groups were trained separately. As a tutor I met daily with my domestic team and Child Protection and Safety was always discussed.
49. There was a clear procedure in reporting any concerns given to all staff and regular reminders were also given. I am not sure when this was implemented. A reminder to

share any concern, record any concern on the relevant forms and that if you feel something is not right to follow up any concerns with a check. All staff were issued with a key action point card with contact details and steps to take.

50. Staff were always encouraged to share and discuss concerns following clear process and guidelines and never encouraged to act alone or use discretion. 'Always Share.'
51. There were full and complete policies and guidelines in place. These policies were in place in 2013 as evident from my raising of concerns. Training and reminders were regular and ongoing and involved more people. [REDACTED] wasn't asked to be involved in setting policies but I know parents subsequently were. Child safety and wellbeing was a standard agenda point at all meetings. I am confident these work.

External monitoring

52. There were regular official visits, both announced and unannounced by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate. They spoke both in groups and individually with the boys alongside more informal interactions during inspections. Staff were present for some discussion and boys also had the opportunity to meet privately without staff present. I spoke to them individually and as part of a group where appropriate. I believe staff were selected randomly and as official visitors were granted access throughout the school they also spoke freely with staff. More general feedback was given through the school management and specifics during the meetings discussions and conversations.

Record-keeping

53. The school had a rigorous record keeping procedure and had done so throughout my time there. Any allegation of abuse would to my knowledge be acted upon and recorded. I cannot comment on recording before my employment. As far as I recall there were records of pupil experiences. I remember seeing records in pupil files with communications and records therein.

54. I refer to a pupil's school reports here and any communications between school, home, pupil, on any matter to do with the care and wellbeing of a boy.....medical history, family, bereavement, divorce, bullying at a previous school. There were follow on notes each year and there was open dialogue with parents. We also carried out surveys to enable and gathered feedback from the boys, used to effect positive change and impact.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

55. I reported the two concerns I had regarding James Rainy Brown and DRW and these were dealt with in line with policy and feedback given to me. These were recorded.
56. In March 2010 I reported a concern I had regarding James Rainy Brown massaging a boy's foot in his office during duty one evening. I had a gut feeling it wasn't right and that it was not appropriate given he had no medical training to do so. I was uncomfortable with a member of staff massaging a boy's foot! Such actions are not appropriate or in remit. I followed school procedure and reported this to my line manager. The matter was dealt with in line with policy and feedback was given to me that this member of staff had been spoken with.
57. After that incident he did not repeat his behaviour so the issue was resolved and I had no cause for concern afterwards. James did not like me raising this and he didn't speak to me for several months but he subsequently came round. I was interviewed by Police Scotland after James Rainy Brown's death as the school had shared all information with external bodies.
58. In May 2013 I immediately reported through the correct channels that DRW stated he had swam and showered naked when he was a student teacher at Merchiston. I was concerned and this is why I reported these statements. This is not normal practice, and I cannot see any reason why a member of staff would do this, hence my concern.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

59. I was interviewed following the suicide of James Rainy Brown in 2013. From my recollections the school and indeed I cooperated fully with all requests to communicate and share information. I provided a statement. I cannot recall the exact date of the interview and I have no recollection of the statement. I wasn't interviewed on the school campus and I had a lawyer with me.

Convicted abusers

60. I am not aware of anyone working directly at the school though I am aware of Mr Torquil Johnson Ferguson from Rua Fiola Adventure Camps who was jailed for abuse but not relating to a Merchiston pupil. He was a service provider at a camp. I met him briefly when dropping a group to a campsite at Solway Bank and I had no further interactions with him. School staff accompanied these trips.
61. Initially I had no concerns but later, following communication from two parents and their sons, camps there were stopped. The decision to stop attending the camps related to reported privacy when showering. One boy reported feeling uncomfortable in the shower. I have no awareness of any previous allegation of abuse regarding this person. To my knowledge all paperwork was collated ahead of trips and risk assessments were done. Each school will implement individual checks and I do think information should be shared between schools and other facilities actually, to safeguard and protect children.

Specific alleged abusers

James Rainy Brown

62. My employment coincided with James Rainy Brown's from my appointment until his death in April 2013. I believe he was then in his late sixties or early seventies. James

Rainy Brown was a longstanding member of staff. He lived on campus for some of the time, was a house tutor, ran camps and sports activities and he was a maths teacher. He was a colleague on Junior team and when [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] SNR in 2012 I had greater interactions with him in daily routine as House Tutor though I was not responsible for his schedule or timetable.

63. He was very involved in activities, camps and trips. He drove the minibus, cut the grass and was a tutor present most of the time. He was involved, kind and dedicated to the boys and the school. I knew him quite well as [REDACTED] attended camps and activities with him. He was dedicated to children and committed to supporting them and engaging them in activities. He also taught maths and the boys enjoyed the lessons. When disciplining the boys he would give them time out, blue papers, which were written sides, and odd jobs.
64. All House tutors followed guidelines. Routines were in place for the shape of the day. There were written guidelines and these were discussed but there was some flexibility. The key was that the boarding house was the boys' home. James Rainy Brown was very active. He did activities with the boys in the evenings, such as quizzes, reading newspapers and maths challenges. The boys were always settled when I took over from him at the end of the night. He was always engaged and always there. He went the extra mile and the boys liked him. He was a kind man.
65. I was SNR [REDACTED] and he didn't like it, probably because I was a woman and he was old fashioned. We had regular communication and discussion on expectations and routines took place. He questioned and sought explanation but many members of staff did this. We had a good relationship [REDACTED]
66. I was not aware of any concerns regarding him. When I started working at Merchiston I was made aware of his commitment and time at the school, and the work he did. [REDACTED] under his care so I would be very concerned if it was the case that there were concerns about him.

67. After his death I recall a tree was planted but no large memorial. It was a very difficult time for everyone. I did agree that, given the circumstances that followed his death, it was not appropriate to have a big and public memorial. Out of respect for all involved and affected, this would not have been right in my view. The school was also right not to accept the legacy he had left.

68. I had to tell the boys about his death. We subsequently had to tell them he had taken his own life as it was in the papers. I had to protect the boys.

RCQ

69. My employment coincided with hers over a period of four years perhaps. She was a [REDACTED] teacher and later involved in [REDACTED] and house tutoring in the senior school. I would estimate that she was in her early thirties. She was a [REDACTED] teacher and a [REDACTED] teacher. She was also a [REDACTED]. She was a house tutor, resident in a senior house. I had some connection with her in her role as [REDACTED]. As [REDACTED] she would brief Staff on procedures and visit houses so the boys knew her. She spoke in house and at staff meetings.

70. She was very happy, engaging and involved. She was popular with the boys, bubbly and fun. She had pet ducks and a puppy and was caring about animals as a [REDACTED] teacher. She wore bright clothes. I did not know her other than as a colleague and I did not socialise with her. After she left I heard about some inappropriate behaviour. I was appalled and shocked, as were colleagues I knew. I never thought anybody could do such a thing. Reference was made to me about some inappropriate video recording but I never saw it nor spoke with anyone who did.

71. There was a review, and lessons learned regarding appointments being rigorous and thorough, which I always thought they were. Her aptness as a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was discussed. In my opinion in hindsight she displayed grooming tendencies. Training has shown me this. My own appointment was very, at each stage of my employment and progress, rigorous. Training in grooming was given to staff, (and was ongoing) which was very helpful. Lessons were learned and all

appointments, even internal ones, were very thorough. There was an enhanced and clear procedure in place for interviews and appointments and HR was appointed as a direct result of what happened with RCQ [REDACTED]

DRW [REDACTED]

72. My employment coincided with his from 2010 to 2013. I would imagine he was in his early forties. He was Junior Pringle Housemaster and a [REDACTED] teacher. I had applied for the role of Housemaster at the same time and DRW [REDACTED] got the job. James Rainy Brown very much wanted him for the role and I accepted this and supported him. He was a colleague until 2012 when I became SNR [REDACTED] and had more close workings with him.
73. DRW [REDACTED] was hard-working, dedicated, committed and a family man. He was also a Christian. His family lived on campus. I saw him with children in his role as teacher and housemaster and he was friendly, happy and engaged. He was committed in his role as Housemaster and teacher.
74. I could not say if DRW [REDACTED] was influenced by James Rainy Brown but he totally admired everything about him. They both loved the outdoors. He maintained the relationship after the gap year. They were similarly minded. James saw DRW [REDACTED] as his successor. Their relationship was close, as a family. They had clearly known one another for many years. James was like a grandfather figure to DRW [REDACTED]'s children. The [REDACTED] held James in great regard, love and affection.
75. I had to move in and care for the boarders after the death of James Rainy Brown as DRW [REDACTED] struggled. My understanding was that after the death of JRB, DRW [REDACTED] chose to return to [REDACTED] with his family, after a devastating time. DRW [REDACTED] didn't work again after James died. I took over his role and did it alongside my own. He left in July and I moved in as Housemaster. The family had lost a very close member of their 'family'. I never had any conversation in relation to whether his 'departure from Merchiston was necessary'.

76. I saw ^{DRW} discipline children with care, discussion and restoratively. He used time out and some blue papers. He was supportive, caring and nurturing. He disciplined children within the school policy. In May 2013 I immediately reported through the correct channels that he had stated that he had swam and showered naked when he was a student teacher at Merchiston. I had no concerns about him prior to that. If I had found out about this earlier, I would have reported it. I always reported anything that concerned me. As a professional that was a given.

QZA

77. My employment coincided with his from the start of my employment in 2005 until his retirement. I think he was in his late fifties. He was ^{SNR} and an teacher. He was a colleague to me and a senior member of staff to refer disciplinary matters to. He was precise, engaging, friendly and supportive. When with children he set and maintained high standards, he was direct, precise, dedicated and committed. With regard to discipline, as ^{SNR} his role was in terms of more serious matters and he followed school policy. I did not have much interaction in this area. I did not witness him abusing children and I did not hear of him abusing children.

Helping the Inquiry

78. I was suspended 'Without Prejudice' in 2015. I inherited a 'sitting on a bench' time out system which ceased and the seat was removed. There was a thorough investigation by the school and I was completely exonerated of any wrongdoing and I returned to work though this was a very stressful time which was not without impact. I am confused and now very anxious about this content. It was a very traumatic time both personally and professionally and was not upheld in any way. 'Without prejudice' it certainly did not seem.
79. Boarding school environments are very different places now, much more family based and nurturing. Procedures and policies are clear and children are engaged and involved in the development of these and in relation to the support available. Merchiston is an open and reflective school, always willing to listen, engage and

improve procedures with the safety, happiness and wellbeing of the boys always to the fore.

80. I feel it is important to finish by saying that I have found this whole process very distressing. A feeling of sadness for those affected and for my much loved profession, has taken its toll. I am very anxious and concerned that this report will see all of us working in boarding schools as tarnished with this dreadful brush, and boarding schools as unnatural and awful places. That would be a dreadful result, and I would feel my life's work to date in question.
81. I attended boarding school myself and loved every moment of it. From a very young age I knew that I would go into education and the care of people in general, and a love of making others happy and reaching potential has always been a goal. I have strong personal values of kindness, care, empathy and an inner drive to make a positive impact on those and the world around me. I can see the huge need and benefits a caring and nurturing boarding environment can be for so many children.
82. Boarding has changed so much, rightly, over the years. I entered the teaching profession at the age of 21 and have loved every moment of this vocation. I do, and did, see it as a commitment, a vocation. Parents put their trust in us, and I take that responsibility with great care and see it as an honour and privilege. School should be a very happy, nurturing and caring place, where children can grow and develop to be the best that they can be, leaving school to go out into the world well equipped with the skills to do so. And by skills I mean complete skills, far beyond simply achieving results! They should have people around them who genuinely care about them and take this role seriously, as I did and do. I have also had the great privilege to work with many, many similarly dedicated and caring professionals. And professionals they are and were.
83. Of course there will be mistakes and we must, as we have done throughout time, learn from and fix these. I absolutely hate to think of any child who has been negatively impacted, hurt or distressed by incidents from their time at school! That upsets me greatly. It is not right and it should not happen. We should be doing everything we can to protect children from all harm. No child should feel otherwise.

School should have a positive impact and leave lasting good memories. Mine did and I am incredibly grateful for that, and indeed strived to bring that and achieve that for the children in my care. Each and every one of them mattered to me, their happiness, wellbeing and safety, in all regards. And yes, that may be looking at the world through rose tinted glasses, but that's not a bad place to aspire to reach, surely!

84. So I really do hope that the findings of this report will not demonise all teachers who have dedicated their time, energy and hearts, to being good, actually brilliant, role models, carers and teachers, but rather recognise that many of us make a real difference for good.

85. 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.

QTL
Signed.....

Dated..... 15 March 2021