

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

DGD

1. My name is DGD. My date of birth is 1976. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Qualifications and work history

2. I have a BEd (Hons) degree from the University of Edinburgh. I was a supply teacher in the Moray District from November 2000 to June 2001. From around January or February 2001 to June 2001, I was an assistant house tutor in Gordonstoun House, Gordonstoun School, Elgin, Moray. I was a part-time teacher at Gordonstoun from April 2001 to June 2001. Since October 2001, I have been working with the UK Government.

Gordounstoun School, Elgin, Moray

Work role

3. I started working for the school in around January or February 2001. I was employed as an assistant house tutor from approximately January or February 2001. I finished working as a house tutor in June 2001. I worked from April 2001 to June 2001 as a part-time teacher.

Recruitment

4. I cannot remember how I heard about the vacancy at the school, or whether I applied or was invited to take the job. I wanted the job because I required a job and the role allowed me to continue with local supply teaching. I wanted to work with children because I had trained as a teacher and was enthusiastic about teaching. I cannot remember the application or interview process, who interviewed me or what kind of questions were asked.

References

5. I cannot remember what qualifications or experience was needed for the job, or what references, if any, I gave to the school. In terms of checks made to find out if I was suitable to work with children, Scottish Disclosure checks were carried out. A General Teaching Council Probation Report and UK Government Reference were given by the school when I left. I cannot remember what the references said or covered.

Professional registration

6. I do not know if professional registration was a condition of my employment with the school, or otherwise stipulated by them. I was a member of the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Initial impressions

7. I had been at the school before and as such I was not surprised to find the school organised, professional and of a high quality. There was a good balance of education and pastoral provision in place. It had teaching facilities, sports facilities, boarding houses, outdoor grounds (with sports pitches), staff accommodation, a church, workshops, a medical facility, and catering and laundry facilities.

8. I was accommodated in the house tutor's accommodation in Gordonstoun House. The assistant tutor's flat was at the end of the building, half a floor below the students' accommodation on the top floor of the building.

Structure

9. From memory, the school had a head teacher, deputy heads, heads of different school levels, heads of academic departments and teaching staff, boarding house staff, and support staff. There were numerous other staff in the school. I do not know how many. While I knew the academic staff in passing, I knew the head teacher, deputy heads, the head of sixth form, the summer school director and office staff, the [REDACTED] staff, and the house tutor for Gordonstoun House. I had limited engagement with the wider staff in my time as I worked outside the school for a portion of the week.
10. The overall lead for the school was the head teacher. However, there was leadership at the different school levels and in the boarding house environment.
11. In my role as assistant house tutor, I was accountable to the house tutor in the first instance and the school senior management. In my role as a [REDACTED] teacher, I was responsible to the head of the [REDACTED] department. I do not know if any of the staff changed during my time at the school.

Pupils

12. I do not know how many boys or girls were in the school. I believe in 2001 the age range was secondary pupils only. I do not know how long they tended to stay at the school. It varied from pupil to pupil. I do not know what the ratio of pupils to staff was, or whether there were any changes during my time at the school to pupil numbers, the age range or ratio of pupils to staff. I believe that homework was completed by the students in the boarding house, or classrooms if specific equipment was required.

My work

13. In my role as an assistant house tutor in Gordonstoun House, I was responsible for providing pastoral supervision and support to the sixth form students in the boarding house, when rostered on duty. Gordonstoun House was the boarding house for the sixth form students. I am asked how many children I was responsible for in this role. I believe the number was approximately ten in the boarding house. As a [REDACTED] teacher, I was responsible for covering other [REDACTED] teachers' classes as required. The number of students I was responsible for when teaching varied depending on the class.

14. I am asked who supervised or checked up on me and what contact, if any, I had with the pupils other than during classroom time. The house tutor was responsible for me in my boarding house duties. The head of [REDACTED] was responsible for my [REDACTED] department involvement. In addition to my pastoral responsibility in the boarding school when on duty, I would support other staff with [REDACTED] as directed by the school. My contact with students took place in the boarding house and in [REDACTED] locations such as [REDACTED]. I was a part-time employee so my interaction with students was limited. I believe that it was predominately in my duty periods in the boarding house and approximately three teaching periods in the week. None of this changed during my time at the school.

Induction and training

15. I am asked how my role was explained to me and by whom. I believe that at an initial arrival interview with a member of the management team, possibly the deputy head, I was introduced to the house tutor. He showed me around the house and explained my role. I cannot remember what, if any, induction or training I was given at the start of my employment at the school. I cannot remember what training I was given in child protection or safeguarding matters, or whether I was offered any other training or education during my time at the school. I cannot remember if I was given any written or unwritten guidance or instructions by the school about my role and responsibilities.

School routine for children

16. I do not know what the procedure was when children started at the school, what steps were taken to settle them in, or how they were allocated to boarding houses. As an assistant house tutor I had access to Gordonstoun House boarding house. If I was required to visit another boarding house, I would have approached the house tutor's residence.
17. I cannot remember when the students got up in the morning. They were in sixth form and self-sufficient. I do not know if there were children in the school who had a problem with bedwetting.

Clothes and shoes

18. The students wore school uniform or sports kit. On Saturday afternoons and Sundays, when not at chapel, the students could wear their own clothes. I believe the uniform was worn at all times except for sport and for limited periods at weekends. The students polished their own shoes. I believe that all washing was completed at the school laundry on site.

Mealtimes

19. The school had a refectory with a counter style servery when I was there. Students and staff collected their food from the servery and returned their trays to a rotating point. When I was on the school site, I would have my school meals in the school refectory in the staff dining room. The students had their meals in the main open plan dining area. I do not know what happened if a child did not like the food or did not eat or finish their meals.

Washing and bathing

20. The students were self-sufficient and, as far as I am aware, they were not supervised when washing and bathing.

Sleeping arrangements

21. The students slept in single rooms. I believe that each student had a single bed, cupboard, desk and chair provided. They kept their clothes and any other belongings in their cupboard and generally in their room. In terms of the routine at bedtime, I believe that the students were generally self-sufficient. I cannot remember what time they went to bed. The house tutor or deputy house tutor were on duty through the night. I believe that the students were free to get up during the night if they needed to.

Leisure time

22. Most students participated in sports activities, service activity (e.g. Fire Service) and clubs such as chess. They had periods of free time also. I believe that most activities were run by teachers with an interest in this area. I was specifically involved in sports coaching and Combined Cadet Force activities. I believe that all students had an organised activity every week day, which varied from competitive team sports to social sports. I believe that the older pupils could leave the school grounds with permission.
23. I believe that all children had some form of personal items to a greater or lesser degree. I do not know if they got pocket money or treats.

Trips/holidays

24. The school had an expedition programme that involved different forms of activity and sailing away from the school. In addition, the school played competitive sports fixtures. I do not know the specifics of these trips or locations. I believe that staff from the school accompanied the children. I only attended a junior school walking expedition for two days. I was an assistant to the senior expedition leader.

Religious instruction

25. I am only aware of the students attending chapel on a Sunday and for assembly. I believe it was a weekly service. I do not know if it was mandatory.

Health

26. I believe that all health problems were handled by the school nurse in the first instance. The school nurse was based at the school. I do not know what happened if a child needed to be seen by a doctor or where they went if they needed to go to hospital. I do not know if any routine health checks for the children were in place, or what the arrangements were for children to see a dentist. I have no knowledge of what records were kept of medical issues.

Chores

27. I do not know if the students did any manual work, such as polishing floors or laundry work.

Birthdays and family contact

28. I do not know what happened on a child's birthday.
29. I am not aware of any visitors either to the students or to the school during my time there. I do not know if they went out to visit parents or other family, or whether parents and other family were encouraged to visit. I do not know if a visitors book was kept.

Internal monitoring

30. I am asked what checks were made by the school to see whether I was doing my job properly. I had regular face-to-face meetings with the house tutor and the head of [REDACTED]. I do not know what checks were made by the school to see whether the students were being cared for properly. I believe that the house tutor had regular house meetings with all students in the house. I believe other informal welfare checks would take place as the staff moved through the boarding house. I am not aware of feedback being given to staff following a check or what, if any, follow-up was made.
31. I am asked what practice or procedure was there for disciplining staff. I believe that the senior management would deal with all staff matters. In terms of procedure for staff to raise a grievance, I was advised to speak to the house tutor or head of [REDACTED] in the first instance or to escalate to a member of the management team. I do not know what practice or procedure there was for staff to whistle-blow or raise concerns about other staff.
32. I am asked how supported I felt by the school and whether I had adequate support to do my job properly. I felt fully supported both as an assistant house tutor and a [REDACTED] teacher.

External monitoring

33. I do not know what inspectors or other officials visited the school. I do not know what steps were taken by any inspectors to obtain the views of the students. I am not aware whether they came to inspect the school as a whole or to speak to individuals or groups of students, or whether staff were present if they did speak to them. I do not know if they gave feedback or produced inspection reports.

Siblings

34. I do not know if siblings in the school lived together or separately.

Access to children

35. I am asked who had access to children on their own. Given the nature of residential boarding schools, any member of teaching or pastoral staff could be approached by a student at any time for support or assistance. I am not aware of the support staff or people external to the school having access to the students. I do not know how the students' safety was protected.

Records

36. I do not know what written or unwritten policy, guidance or instructions were given by the school on the keeping of records. I am not aware of keeping any notes or records when I worked at the school. I did not write any records. I do not know what records were kept of admissions, punishment, visitors, inspections, discipline or health, or who kept them. I do not know where they were kept or who could access them. I have no knowledge of records generally within the school.

Discipline

37. I have no knowledge of the disciplining and punishment of students at the school. I do not know whether there were written or unwritten codes of conduct or rules of behaviour. I was not aware of any written or unwritten guidance or instructions by the school on sanctions and punishment of students. I am not aware of what type of behaviour resulted in a sanction or punishment, or what sanctions or punishments were given to children, or by whom. I do not believe that I ever had to discipline a

student. If I had been in this position, I would have referred it to a superior for action. I am not aware of other staff sanctioning or punishing children.

38. I am asked how I would describe the culture of the school towards discipline. The school had a strong team ethos with trust, discipline and community as central themes. The rules were clear to students. I am not aware of any specific discipline incidents or how these were managed if they occurred. I am not aware of what, if any, records or punishment books were kept. I do not know if there was a process for recording sanctions and punishments.

Prefects, Peer Discipline and Fagging

39. I am asked what involvement, if any, did pupils have in the disciplining of children at the school. I am not aware of this happening. I have no knowledge of the operation of the system if this was in place.
40. I believe the school operated a prefect system. I do not know how it operated. I am not aware of the process of selection of prefects, what powers they had or what sanctions they could impose. I am told that the Inquiry has heard evidence of fagging and I am asked what I understand the word to mean. I am not aware of fagging and do not know if it occurred at the school.

Abuse

41. I did not see behaviour that I considered to be abuse of children taking place at the school. I am asked if I did not see abuse myself, whether I was aware that abuse was taking place. No, I was not aware. No student spoke to me of abuse. I am not aware of any student ever needing medical attention because they had been abused. I am asked, with the benefit of hindsight, if I consider any sanction, punishment, other practice to constitute abuse. I never witnessed any abuse.

Supports and reporting of abuse

42. I am asked who, either in or outside the school, could children speak to about any concerns or worries. The students had a network of points of contact throughout the school that they could approach: teaching staff, pastoral staff and year group heads. It is my belief that all students knew that they had an open door to any of the staff as and when they required it. I believe that all students had a specific tutor they could approach in the first instance.
43. I am asked what concerns, if any, did the children raise. No concerns were raised. I am not aware if students in the school were confident and/or trusting enough to speak to any adult about abuse.
44. I could speak to the house tutor or the head of [REDACTED] or any member of the senior management about any concerns or worries. I believe this was made clear to me on arrival. I am asked if I ever reported to anyone anything that was happening to children which caused me concern. No, I did not have concerns and I was not aware of anyone else reporting concerns about students. I cannot remember what written or unwritten policy, guidance or instructions were given by the school on the reporting of abuse by children, staff or any other people. I am asked if, with the benefit of hindsight, I saw anything or became aware of anything that I think I should have reported. No, I did not.

Prior statements

45. I have not given any other statements about my time at the school. I have never been asked about allegations of abuse of children at the school carried out by other people.

Police investigations

46. I am not aware of the police ever visiting the school when I was there, nor am I aware of any abuse of children being reported to the police.

Convicted abusers

47. During my period of employment, I do not know if any person employed or formerly employed by my employer was convicted of the abuse of a child or children at the school.

Allegations

48. I have been asked to provide information about an incident mentioned in a report from the school sent to me by the Inquiry. The report states that a complaint against me was made by a student at the school in 2001. I provided a full written statement detailing my innocence in 2001. My rebuttal of the allegation is fully contained in my original written statement.
49. The school completed a full and thorough investigation. I was interviewed by the head teacher and was asked to provide a statement in relation to the allegation. I strongly denied the accusation and provided a full written statement to this effect. The allegation was closed and no further action was taken.
50. I have taken legal advice and invoke my right to silence. I have no further comment. I have never been the subject of any other complaint in relation to alleged abuse of students at the school.

Helping the Inquiry

51. I am asked what, in my view, are the lessons that can be learned to protect children in a boarding school, now and in the future. An organised and formal pastoral guidance system should exist in all schools. Every student or staff member must feel that they can always turn to someone if they need to discuss an issue. The system must protect everyone involved in the boarding school experience, both students and staff.
52. 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.

DGD

Signed.....

Dated.....

11 July 2020