

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KAO

Support person present: No

1. My name is KAO. My date of birth is 1959. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to private school

2. I was born in Edinburgh. My mum's name was and my dad was called. I don't have any siblings. We lived in the Blackhall area of Edinburgh. Life at home was fine. I had lots of friends and I don't remember any issues in my early years at all. My dad was a bank manager and my mum didn't work to start with but started a job as I was starting the main school to help pay the fees.

Edinburgh Academy, Henderson Row, Edinburgh

3. I recently contacted the school to ask for my records and they stated that I started at the school in September 196 and I left in July 197. They didn't tell me any more than that. I started school at the age of five. That was at Denham Green. My dad had been at the Edinburgh Academy and so my parents chose the same school for me. I think they were surprised that I passed the entrance exam. I wasn't very bright. I don't remember much about the entrance exam or the lead up to going to school.
4. My parents paid my school fees throughout. I was always going to be at the Academy as a day pupil. There was never any discussion about me boarding. The school was

just a bus ride away and it was easy to get to and from the school on the bus. There was never any pressure from the school to become a boarder.

5. I wasn't aware of the boarders being treated any differently from the day pupils by the teachers. I didn't have close friends who were boarders. I must have had some friends who were boarders because there were a lot of boarders at the Academy. My circle was made up of day pupils. I don't remember ever being in any of the boarding houses. I don't remember ever being told what life was like for the boys in the boarding houses.

Lower School

6. I don't remember much about Denham Green. I think it was fine there and I don't remember any bad things about it. I think I quite enjoyed my time at Denham Green. I can't remember what district it was in, but it was probably two or three miles from the upper school. I was at Denham Green from the age of five and up to around the age of eleven. I remember playing lots of sports in the lower school and it was quite sport orientated. I can't even remember the classrooms and my memories of that time are very vague.
7. I don't know who the headmaster was when I was there. I don't remember the names of any of the teachers. Nothing much sticks in my mind about the lower school. At that point I think was getting a lift to school from my parents. In the upper school I was taking the bus to school. I always knew I would be moving on to the upper school.

Upper School

8. The upper school was quite different. I think in the first couple of years there I was fine. I wasn't very bright so I was in one of the lower classes. I found the work quite hard. There was a different dynamic in the upper school. It was very focussed on learning and passing exams or you wouldn't get into university.

9. The head teacher in the upper school was called [ICH]. He was there for the duration of my time in that part of the school. He would sometimes come into class. He was always at assembly. I thought he was quite stand-offish personally. He was very strict. I don't remember a deputy, but there might have been one.

10. I remember some teacher's names. There was Mr Haslet, Mr Wilmot and Mr Dawson who taught maths, I think. [IBW] was the [] teacher. I was quite into [] and I was in the school [] and various []. [] was quite a big part of my life. There was a Mr Turvey who I think taught biology. The gym teacher was called Mr [IBU]. His nickname was '[IBU]', though I don't know why that was. There was also Mr [IDO] and he might have taught history, I'm not sure.

11. The first couple of years I was settling into the school and it was ok. I played rugby and I played some cricket as well in summer. I think I was in the third team for rugby. There was a lot of emphasis in the school on playing sport. If you weren't good at sport I don't know if it was a hindrance for some people. I quite enjoyed sport generally. I didn't like running. I think as long as you participated in sport it was fine.

12. There was definitely differentiation depending on how you were academically. It was just schoolboys being schoolboys and you'd get called names for being 'thick' and being bottom of the class. That kind of ribbing. That was coming from other pupils, not staff. I don't remember any members of staff saying things like that.

Routine at The Edinburgh Academy, Upper school, Henderson Row, Edinburgh

Mornings and afternoons

13. I don't remember what time I arrived in the morning. It was probably about 8:30 am or 8:45 am. We had to go into assembly on a daily basis. Then lessons followed that. There was a breaktime in the morning before more lessons and then lunchtime. There was another breaktime in the afternoon. There were various things happening after school. Sometimes it was sport. There were pipe band rehearsals. I played the drums.

Mealtimes / Food

14. I would have my lunch at school. The food was ok. I think we collected it from a servery. If I didn't like anything I didn't have to eat it. I don't recall if the teachers ate at the same time as the pupils.

Clothing / uniform

15. I had to go and get a lot of new kit before starting at the upper school. That was at a shop called Aitken and Niven. I can remember going there with my mum. There were shirts and ties and sports tops and things like that. There were also blazers and caps to purchase. They were blue with the Edinburgh Academy insignia on them. I think we wore the caps in the beginning of the upper school. There was a standard blue blazer with the Academy insignia on the pocket and grey trousers. At some point we wore a green tweed jacket. I think that was during the wintertime.

School

16. We had different teachers for different subjects and moved classrooms throughout the school day. After school there could be pipe band or orchestra practice. I had music lessons as well and they were always after school. That was violin and clarinet. The piano was my main subject but it wasn't taught at the school. I had private lessons.
17. There were sport lessons on certain days of the week. It was based around rugby and cricket. There would be matches against other schools as well as practice. I don't think these things after school were optional.
18. The teaching standard was fine. I think the education part of the school was quite good. I didn't have to stay to do prep in school. There were parents' evenings at the school and my parents would come to them. I didn't sit with them when they spoke with the teachers. I don't know of any issues highlighted other than my academic work. I imagine that would have been the issue, though I don't know that.

19. At the end of the school day sometimes boys had to stay to do the Combined Cadet Force activities. The school was very keen on military things. We had to dress up in uniform for drills. It was a bit like the army. I managed to escape these military things because I was playing in the pipe band. That was a good move.
20. At weekend there was some rugby played on some Saturdays. There was the occasional concert and Christmas carol concerts. There wasn't a regular Saturday event like extra school classes.

Religion

21. There were prayers said at assembly. There was a religious class.

Trips / Holidays

22. I went skiing with the school for a week. There was a trip up to the Highlands, staying at Blair House I think it was. That was mainly about going on long walks. I can't remember if teachers took us on these trips. These experiences of trips were fine.

Visits / Inspections

23. I don't remember any external parties coming in to inspect the school.

Healthcare

24. I don't remember if there was a matron or nurse in the school.

Discipline

25. I don't remember anyone explaining the codes of discipline to us. Detention was one thing the teachers had to discipline us with. Sometimes there was detention after

school. That could be if you got poor marks in your homework or if you hadn't done your homework or if you did something wrong like you ate chocolate in class. It could have been if you'd left something at home that you should have brought into school. There were various misdemeanours that would get you detention. The teachers gave detention. I don't know if the boarders got detention as well as day boys.

26. I don't think my parents got notified that I was getting detention. I was getting the bus home so they didn't have to pick me up. I don't remember telling my parents I was getting detention, and why. The teachers were all very different people and some were quite kind and some were nasty. There was a broad range. In some classes you just wanted to keep your head down and not get noticed and in other classes you felt relaxed in. It depended on the teacher.
27. There was corporal punishment. You could get hit with a tawse for various things. It seemed that was part of the school rules. It was a leather strap and at one end it was cut so it was split into tongues.
28. The Academy had a system of Prefects who were senior pupils called Ephors and they were there in every school year in the upper school. I don't know how the Ephors were chosen, but I think they were chosen by the Rector. There definitely wasn't a vote by the pupils. It may have been done on exam results and sporting achievements. The Ephors were the elite in their sport or top of the class. They had their own office that was close to the Rector's part of the school.
29. The Ephors could give you lines. Then you might get one hundred lines from them and told to make sure it's done by tomorrow. The lines had to be taken from the books you were studying for English Literature and I remember that once, I was conveniently studying 'Kes', and there was a line in the book 'You fucking bastard' or something like that and I chose it. It was the sentence I had to repeat over and over again so that the Ephors would read the line.
30. I was reported to the Rector, [redacted] for that and I was taken in front of him and he gave me a bollocking over it. I told him it was just a coincidence. He never asked me

to explain why I was doing lines and if there was anything wrong. It was straight to the bollocking. I don't think I was in front of the Rector at any other time. I was doing a hundred lines every night at home and it was a consistent, almost daily, thing.

31. I don't think there was anything written down about what the Ephors could do to us but I have a memory that before I went to the upper school, perhaps when I was in Denham Green, that they could give physical punishments. When I went to upper school it had only just been changed. They could still give out lines. There was a regular few of the Ephors who were the issue for me. There was one I particularly recall called [REDACTED]. He must have been old enough to be on the brink of leaving the school, so aged seventeen or eighteen.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy

Hamish Dawson

32. One teacher in particular, Hamish Dawson, used the tawse. He gave the belt for anything he chose. He also used to throw the wooden board duster on a regular basis at us and it hit people and I imagine that hurt. It didn't hit me.
33. I got the belt from Mr Dawson. You had to go up to his desk and hold your hand out for him and you'd get hit with it so many times. I can't remember how many strokes you'd get from him. I got belted by him maybe a dozen times on the hand and each time I got about six. I don't know if that was the accepted maximum. He belted other pupils in the same way. This would be in front of the class. It could be for some misdemeanour in class or if your homework wasn't good enough. Anything really. It happened regularly, maybe more than once a week in my class. I don't think he gave out any other punishment like writing lines or telling you to come back to class and do another hour's work. I don't remember how long he was my teacher for.
34. It was a frightening class to be in. He was volatile. You just wanted to keep your head down and hope you didn't get picked on.

Mr IBU

35. I went through a period when I skipped games and got caught by Mr IBU, the gym teacher. I would guess I was aged thirteen or fourteen. I think he told me in class to report to his office at the end of the school day. When I went to his office he gave me six with a full-sized wooden cricket bat. There wasn't anybody else in the office when he did this. That as a shocking episode for me. It was unbelievably painful. It was on my bare bottom. He told me to lower my trousers and my pants. I was bent over a desk or a table. I was physically sick after it.
36. I don't recall anything Mr IBU said to me before or after hitting me with the bat. He was shouting at me. I know he was really furious about it and angry with me because I'd managed to skip games for weeks. I was skipping games because I didn't like cross country running. I'd actually come off the roster which was great. I'm not aware of any written record being made of this punishment by him. I still came across Mr IBU after this incident and he didn't make any further reference to it.
37. I have a memory that my friend from class, a fellow day pupil, waited for me outside. When I staggered out he was there, I seem to remember. I discussed it with my friend when I came out. I don't remember him saying he'd heard what went on.
38. This punishment wasn't a recognised thing at school. I don't remember hearing that anyone else got that punishment. I didn't talk to other boys about it specifically, but other people in my class were aware of the punishment.
39. It happened on the one occasion only. That was the worst thing that happened to me at school. I didn't require any medical attention afterwards. I had bruises for about a week. I didn't tell my parents. They weren't aware of my injury and I hid it from them.
40. I can't remember anything else done by Mr IBU that I consider to be abuse.

Mr IDO

41. A teacher called Mr IDO could give you the boot. I can't remember what he taught. Plenty of people got the boot. It was a punishment that he gave pupils. You'd have to bend over and he'd just kick you. It was a full kick. It was painful. This was in the classroom. He would call you up to his desk. I saw it happen to other boys. I can't remember who they were. It was just his method of punishment for the usual things, like your homework wasn't good enough. It happened to me, maybe three times. I was bending over when he did it.

Changing rooms – generally

42. I used to love playing rugby but the showers and changing rooms became places to avoid, hence my determination to skip games as often as possible. I have some memories of groping after rugby when we were getting changed. I've got a memory of a teacher pulling towels away from boys' waists. This happened in the changing rooms with the wooden benches. I think boys were coming out of the showers and they had towels round their waists. It didn't have any effect on me at all at the time. I don't think it happened to me. It was just something that was in my memory. I don't know which teacher it was and I don't know the context of it. I have the memory of it and I don't think it was a punishment. Maybe those boys were just being slow.
43. I don't know if there would normally be a teacher supervising the changing rooms. I don't remember.

The Ephors

44. The Ephors didn't impact on me for the first few years. Then I must have done something and caught their attention I suppose. I would have been aged thirteen or fourteen. I became a target for the Ephors along with a number of other boys from my class in terms of bullying. The relationship me and some of my classmates had with them deteriorated. The Ephors were intimidating and I was being told by them to

'smarten up'. Outside of the Ephor office there was plenty of stuff said that was intimidation.

45. I don't think they were allowed to punish us by hitting us or anything like that, but you could get called into their office and get clipped round the ear by them. I didn't see the others being clipped round the ear as that happened in the Ephors' office. If you were called into their office you knew you were going to get a clip round the ear.
46. I could get called into their office and they would ask 'Why are you so thick **KAO**?' and clip I'd round the ear with the backs of their hands. I was in the bottom class and I think that was enough for the Ephors to take an interest in me. School work was a struggle for me. I was in the bottom half of the bottom class. I didn't get any extra tutoring help from the school.
47. In the worst case, one of the Ephors slashed the back of my neck with a steel comb as I was walking into morning assembly. I felt something cutting the back of my neck. When I turned round one of the Ephors, I don't know the name, had done it. I'd had dealings with that Ephor before. He was one of the worst in the group. I put my hand to my neck and there was blood. One of my classmates told me that it was a steel comb that had been used. I didn't see the comb.
48. I don't remember having to get any medical attention after my neck was cut by the Ephor with the steel comb. I don't remember if my parents noticed the cut on my neck or any blood on my shirt.

Reporting of abuse at the Edinburgh Academy

49. I never reported my experiences while I was at the school. There wasn't anybody at the school I could have told about the Ephors. There wasn't any sort of buddy system when the older ones look after the young boys. That was probably what the Ephors were supposed to be doing.

Leaving the Edinburgh Academy

50. I never asked my parents if I could leave the school before I was sixteen. I would have felt guilty going to my parents and asking to move schools and it would have been quite an upheaval to move. They'd made financial sacrifices so I could attend the same school as my father had.
51. The Ephors made things very unpleasant. I didn't want to be at the school. I must have been about fourteen when I made a decision I was going to move down south as soon as I could. I didn't want to have to bump into these people ever again. I knew if I stayed in Edinburgh I would. I was determined I would leave school as soon as I legally could at the age of sixteen, much to my parents' dismay. I wasn't the only pupil leaving at sixteen.
52. My parents wanted me to stay at school until I was eighteen and they were keen for me to go to Glasgow College of Music. That would require five O' Levels and two A' levels. I had no intention of going there or anywhere. I just wanted to leave Edinburgh. I sat O' Levels in my last year at the Academy and I think I got four O' Levels. It wasn't enough anyway. I was very poor at science subjects and maths and I think the school decided I wasn't going to pass my maths exam. They said they'd put me through the Scottish National Certificate for O' Level rather than the Oxford and Cambridge exam which all their other exams were. The Scottish one was easier so I scraped through that one.
53. I think there was a guidance teacher at the Academy guiding us with exams and careers choices. I probably did get some advice but it wasn't any help to me. I knew what I was going to do.

Life after being in private school

54. I didn't leave Edinburgh straight away. I did a business studies course for a good few months. I went to Basil Patterson College in Edinburgh the idea being, from my parent's perspective, to pass another O' Level and go on to music college. I think they eventually realised it wasn't going to happen. I stayed a few months at Basil Patterson and then went away down south.
55. I went down to Letchworth for a weekend with a friend who was at college with me and he had a girlfriend in Letchworth. I quite liked it there so I made my mind up it was a place I could go to. I was probably still sixteen when I moved. I got a job in a supermarket the day after I arrived. I lived in a room with an Italian family for very little money.
56. I went on to do lots of different things. Music has always been a part of it. I was a pianist for a singer for a long time and I did some recording work as a session pianist. I also owned a par-three golf course in Letchworth and built a house on the course. I lived there for about ten years. Now I own a record shop.
57. My partner [REDACTED] had two sons. One committed suicide about five years ago and unfortunately his older brother tried to do the same. Now we're trying to get him home from hospital but he has life-changing injuries. It's been a tough time.

Impact

58. My time at the Academy had an impact on me and made me want to leave the town I was born in, and I loved Edinburgh. I was determined to leave because of my time at school and move away. I didn't want to bump into these people from school again so I didn't have any more contact with anybody from the school, even my friends. I didn't want to have to think about it and I put my experiences into a box and thought that was the end of it.

59. The worst aspect of the Academy for me was the Ephors, but the teachers had an impact on me too. I felt scared just going to school. I skipped school because I just didn't want to be there. It was a horrible thing, going to school. My parents were pretty annoyed with me. My dad was especially annoyed with me. I can't remember what the school did about it, but I don't think they did much. I don't think the school asked me why I was skipping school. I didn't feel there was anyone at school I could have spoken to, although there were some good teachers there.
60. I didn't feel the need to seek mental health support for dealing with the things that had happened to me at school. I was able to put it away and completely put it aside. From the day I left the school that was what I decided I was going to do. As soon as I moved away life was much better for sure.
61. I hadn't thought about my time at the Academy until recently. Last year I heard about the Inquiry when I was driving my car with my partner to go and visit her son in hospital. I heard Nicky Campbell on the radio talking about the Edinburgh Academy. I had to pull over and stop the car because I couldn't believe somebody was talking about it. I hadn't heard anything before that and I never looked for any information about my school. It was after that I contacted the Inquiry. I'm not involved in any groups of former pupils.

Reporting of Abuse

62. I'd reported the abuse to the Inquiry and the report went to the police. I gave a statement to plain-clothes police in Edinburgh in June 2023. I can't recall which police station I went to. I spoke to them about the incident with Mr **IBU** mainly. I also spoke to them about Mr Dawson and Mr **IDO**. I don't think my interactions with the Ephors was part of the statement, although I may have mentioned them. They asked for consent to look at my school record and I agreed to that. They said they were going to investigate further and interview other people.

Records


- 63. I've not kept any of my school reports, but I'm sure my parents would have kept things like that when they were alive. Where they are I don't know. I've got lots of stuff in the garage.

Lessons to be Learned

- 64. For me the removal of the system of Ephors could have given me a happier time at school. That would be the one and the first think I would say. For vulnerable pupils there wasn't anything worse than the system of Ephors that they had in place.

Other information

- 65. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed... 

Dated... 12/07/23