

## Chapter 12:

### Module 7 – St Patrick’s Training School

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## The Module

- 1 The seventh Module concerned four training schools, the first being St Patrick’s, a Roman Catholic school run by the De La Salle Order. The Module commenced on 1 September 2015, Day 134 of the Inquiry, with a general introduction to the training school system by Senior Counsel, followed by an address by Junior Counsel concerning St Patrick’s, and it ended on 14 October 2015, Day 150.
- 2 A total of 27 applicants provided statements which related to St Patrick’s. Of these, eleven were read out for various reasons. Two had sadly died, some had given evidence in a previous module about another home, so their observations on St Patrick’s had been provided earlier, and some were unwell. One witness who had provided a statement decided not to give oral evidence after consultation with counsel on the day. Four former residents at St Patrick’s also gave evidence, while not being applicants. In all, we therefore received oral evidence during the Module from 19 witnesses who had been resident in the training school. A further 39 former residents had given information to the police about allegations or had made civil claims, so that evidence was considered from a total of 70 people who had attended St Patrick’s.
- 3 Seven brothers and seven other members of staff gave oral evidence. One witness who had inspected St Patrick’s gave evidence. Mary Madden, who had worked for the Northern Ireland Office in the final years of our remit when the NIO bore responsibility for the training schools, and Karen Pearson, who represented the Department of Justice and the then Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety, gave evidence. The Diocese of Down and Connor, the De La Salle Order and the Health and Social Care Board were also represented as core participants.
- 4 We are indebted to all these witnesses for providing their accounts of events at St Patrick’s. We are aware that recalling difficult times and presenting evidence in a public hearing will have been stressful for many witnesses, but both the written and oral evidence was invaluable in providing a full picture.

## The Aims of St Patrick’s

- 5 The draft handbook for Slemish House laid out the overall aims of St Patrick’s:

“As a Christian school, the staff of St Patrick’s attempt to establish, maintain and adhere to Christian ethics and values. These values lead us to believe that all persons are children of God and that service to anyone in need is rendered to God himself. Each boy is accepted for who he is and not for what he does or has done. This attitude reflects belief in the basic dignity of the person which leads us to a more caring society and helps us to remain responsive to the special needs of youth by a greater sensitivity of changing times.
- 6 “Whatever is done in St Patrick’s is intended to help each boy grow in awareness of his own goodness and worth. Ultimately, it is this awareness which makes possible a more fulfilled, more responsible and more constructive life.
- 7 “While respecting individual differences, St Patrick’s provides the young person with the secure setting needed for growth towards adulthood. This security is found, primarily within a community of caring, supportive and understanding people. Although the degree of personal involvement varies, no staff member - Caring, Teaching, Medical, Ancillary - is unimportant. Meeting needs, actualising potentials and developing skills are essential elements in the school programme. Dealing with irresponsible behaviour must also be included. Irresponsible behaviour is damaging to the sense of self-worth and the good of others and therefore, must be opposed by all who care. Wisdom, as well as active concern, is needed to turn occasions of irresponsibility into opportunities for personal growth and understanding.
- 8 “In living this philosophy, our contribution to a young person’s life is to enhance his opinion of himself and heighten his regard for others”.<sup>1</sup>
- 9 These aims are clear and straightforward, and appear to be consistent with the ideals of the De La Salle Brothers. Although they were drafted prior to the opening of Slemish House, they probably reflect the values which underpinned St Patrick’s from the start.

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1 SPT 18309-18310.

## The History and Role of St Patrick’s

- 10 In 1869, as soon as the Industrial Schools (Ireland) Act 1868 was passed, Bishop Patrick Dorrian, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, established St Patrick’s Industrial School in Donegall Street in the centre of Belfast with an initial intake of 20 to 24 boys. In 1870 the Diocese leased Milltown House in the Falls Road area; this site was on the western edge of the city at that time, and it included a five-acre farm. For a short period both sites were in operation, but on 11 January 1873 St Patrick’s moved to the Milltown site and it remained there for nearly seventy years.<sup>2</sup>
- 11 The school was under the management of a Board comprising the Bishop of the Diocese as Chair and five or six parish priests or administrators as well as the Vicar General of the Diocese. At a meeting on 5 March 1917 there was discussion about the De La Salle Order being invited to take charge of the school. There were adjournments of the Committee meeting, and representatives of the Order attended the Committee on 12 March, a final decision being made on 2 April that the Brothers would take charge of the school on 1 May 1917. They continued to be in charge of St Patrick’s until 1995, and were therefore responsible for the running of the school throughout the period covered by the Inquiry’s terms of reference. They remained accountable, however, to the Diocesan Committee until the 1980s.<sup>3</sup>
- 12 With the partition of Ireland it became apparent that there were no reformatories for boys in Northern Ireland. Brother Peter Marron was appointed head of the school in 1922 and it was during his time that St Patrick’s was designated as a reformatory for Roman Catholic boys as well as an industrial school.<sup>4</sup> As a reformatory it admitted young offenders, and throughout the rest of its history there was an ongoing concern about the differing needs of the boys admitted for ‘care’ and those sent there for ‘justice’ reasons. As early as February 1924 the Committee minutes record that:

“... in the opinion of the Committee [it] is undesirable to have Ref. Boys in the same Estb. with Industrial Boys. We recom. that provision be made for these Ref. Boys elsewhere.”<sup>5</sup>

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2 SPT 842-843.

3 SPT 842-843.

4 RUB 039.

5 SPT 843-844.

Reformatory boys were generally in the minority, but the proposal that they should be moved to separate provision suggests that the Committee wished to revert to their pre-partition remit.

- 13 During the Second World War, following the air raids on Belfast, premises were acquired at Alexander House, Forkill, in County Armagh, near Dundalk, and 62 members of the junior school transferred there from May 1942 to March 1944.<sup>6</sup> The overall number of places was increased to 225.
- 14 A photograph of the Milltown building shows a large house with a substantial extension built to house the boys.<sup>7</sup> BR 26, who worked there for the last six years that these premises were in use, described it as “an old ramshackle building”. He was sited with thirty boys down the lane in a building formerly used as a mill, but most boys were in the main building. He said that conditions were “grim”, but were tolerated as they did not know of anything better.<sup>8</sup>
- 15 BR 26 described the boys admitted in the 1950s as very different from those who were in St Patrick’s in later decades. They often came from broken homes or had been truanting. Some were admitted voluntarily on a charitable basis. The offences which had been committed by boys were generally more trivial.<sup>9</sup>
- 16 As early as February 1943 it was decided to move to new premises “at the earliest possible date” and on 30 August 1943 a 99-acre site was purchased on Glen Road, about a mile from Milltown, but further out of the city. Plans were submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs in January 1946 but it was 1 September 1957 before the new buildings were officially opened by Bishop Mageean.<sup>10</sup> It is unclear why there was such a delay in building the new premises.<sup>11</sup>
- 17 The new buildings were described as a model training school with excellent facilities, and in their early years they attracted a lot of distinguished visitors, such as the Mayor, the High Sherriff and government Ministers. BR 26 said that the new buildings bore no relation to the Milltown site. The buildings were not complete when they moved in; the swimming pool,

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6 SPT 30105.

7 SPT 10026.

8 Day 157, pp.23 to 24.

9 Day 157, pp.24 to 25.

10 SPT 846-847.

11 SPT 846

for example, was finished later, but over the years the site continued to be improved. He described the Glen Road site as “a dream come true”.<sup>12</sup>

- 18 However, in some respects the model was already dated. In its overall size, the school was going against the trend towards smaller units, and in having dormitories for 20 boys, St Patrick’s was running counter to the Home Office guidance issued in 1952, in which it was recommended that large institutions should be broken down into smaller family-sized groups. The school remained on this site until its closure, and almost all the evidence of witnesses relates to the Glen Road site.
- 19 The Committee’s view that St Patrick’s should revert to its industrial school model and cease to admit reformatory boys appears to have changed over time. Under the influence of BR 39, then the head of St Patrick’s, when Rubane House at Kircubbin was purchased by the Diocese in March 1950, it was decided that Rubane should be registered as a voluntary home for boys,<sup>13</sup> that is, admitting boys in need of care rather than young offenders, and a group of boys was transferred from St Patrick’s to the new home, leaving St Patrick’s with its mixture of reformatory and industrial elements unchanged.
- 20 Under the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950, reformatories and industrial schools were all renamed training schools, blurring the distinction between the care and justice elements. St Patrick’s became a training school (though like the other training schools it was also registered as a remand home), but the debate about the distinction between the two groups continued, both professionally and politically. There were, for example, those who argued that there was no clear division between the two groups, that those in need of care often presented more disturbed behaviour than the offenders, and that some children fell into both groups.<sup>14</sup> In England and Wales it was decided to abandon the distinction and under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 all children in need of any form of care were outside their homes committed under Care Orders. It was common practice for English legislation concerning children to be replicated in Northern Ireland, but in this instance, by contrast, in 1979 the Black Report recommended that the two groups should be treated separately, and following the Prior Compromise in November 1986, St Patrick’s was reorganised into a Justice Unit and a Care Unit, which were run separately on the one site.

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12 Day 157, p.26.

13 SPT 845.

14 Day 164, pp.7 and 8.

- 21 From 1969 onwards the justice side of the school was placed under additional stress during the Troubles, as a number of boys were admitted because of their involvement in civil disorder. Lisnevin, which was secure and non-denominational, was opened in 1973, and presumably eased the workload for St Patrick’s. However, the Troubles created tensions between the ‘care’ boys and the ‘justice’ boys, and is dealt with further below.
- 22 In addition to the division between care and justice, the other main distinction in the overall structure of St Patrick’s was that it was divided into a senior side and a junior side. Indeed they were listed as St Patrick’s Senior School and St Patrick’s Junior School. Although they were on the same campus under the control of a single Brother Director, the two sides functioned as totally separate schools, sharing only a few resources in common, such as the chapel, the sports hall, the office and the central kitchen. One witness said that, as a junior, he only saw senior boys through the hatch when they served food in the canteen. There appear to have been a few joint activities, such as the weekly mass and football competitions at Christmas time, but in effect the two schools were distinct. It would appear that twenty of the 24 applicants who have come forward to the Inquiry were probably resident in the Junior School, whereas two of the witnesses put forward by the Order were in the Senior School.
- 23 The junior side focused mainly on schooling, though it also had workshops to offer trade training to boys who reached school leaving age. The senior side focused primarily on preparation for work through trade training. Boys were allocated to one side or the other depending primarily upon their age on admission, with a cut-off point of about fifteen and a half to sixteen. The allocation of boys also depended in some cases on other factors as well as age, such as the maturity of the boy, his behaviour and the type of offences in which he had been involved. With occasional exceptions boys did not move from one side to the other, unless they were discharged and were made subject to a second Training School Order when of senior age.
- 24 It appears that in general there were more boys admitted to the junior school than the senior and more on the care side than the justice side.



Age on admission	Boys admitted for assessment in 1994 (SPT 12638)	Applicants to the Inquiry where ages are known or can be estimated
9	-	1
10	-	-
11	3	1
12	5	1
13	7	9
14	5	7
15	6	2
16	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>

- 25 It will be noted that in both columns relatively few boys aged 12 and under or aged 16 were admitted, and that the peak age for admission was 13. Typically, the majority of boys were admitted to the junior or care side for a couple of years at the end of their schooling. The older boys were placed in the senior school and were more often on the justice side. In the later years there was a move from a senior/junior split to a care/justice split, but this was gradual and seemed to reflect the intake, rather than being policy-driven by the Black Report.
- 26 The buildings at Glen Road came to be seen as institutional, and chalets were built to house smaller groups of boys. Although it had been heralded as a model institution when it was opened and had been in use for only forty years, the main building fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1996.<sup>15</sup> The Department planned to close St Patrick’s, but its proposals met with a sharp reaction, and, perhaps recognising the concerns expressed by the Catholic Church, in 1995 the government agreed to fund additional new buildings.
- 27 Over time there were reductions in the number of boys admitted to St Patrick’s. Its closure coincided with a number of major changes, which took place around the end of the Inquiry’s remit. The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 wound up the training school system in 1996, and St Patrick’s became Glenmona Resource Centre, which was no longer specifically for Roman Catholic children. With the appointment of increasing numbers

15 SPT 10002.

of lay staff, the De La Salle Brothers had become a smaller proportion of the overall staff team and they ceased their formal involvement in 1995, though one of the brothers who gave evidence remained on the staff of the new centre until 1997. The Resource Centre finally closed in January 2001.<sup>16</sup>

- 28 Throughout its existence, therefore, St Patrick’s had a demanding role in being expected to contain, control, care for, educate and train large numbers of boys who had histories of offending and disturbed behaviour. Some of them came directly from the courts, either as offenders or in need of care, but in some cases they were transferred from other establishments as the staff of children’s homes could no longer cope with their behaviour. In the early days there were also ‘voluntary’ admissions when parents approached the school to seek a place for their son.
- 29 For much of its history, St Patrick’s had notional figures of 80 juniors and 80 seniors, totalling 160 boys, but the numbers fluctuated considerably. They ranged from 167 in 1917 to 87 in 1931, with a peak in 1943 of 235. In 1965 there were 147 boys present.<sup>17</sup> At an inspection in December 1993, there were 98 on the roll.
- 30 In view of its size, it will be appreciated that St Patrick’s played a major role in meeting the needs of Roman Catholic boys from the whole of Northern Ireland throughout its existence. In total 4,537 boys were admitted.<sup>18</sup> We have received evidence from 31 former residents; we have records of a further 39 who gave evidence to the police or have made civil claims against the Order. We have therefore only received evidence from 70 people in all, or just under one and a half per cent of the total number of boys who passed through St Patrick’s.
- 31 Clearly, we cannot be certain why more witnesses have not come forward, but we have to make the assumption that fewer people were discontented with the quality of care which they received than in some of the other large homes we have examined where higher percentages of former residents have come forward. This assumption is supported by the fact that, although there are some serious allegations about sexual and physical abuse, very few complaints were made about other aspects of the care, education and training offered by St Patrick’s.

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16 SPT 10003.

17 RUB 063.

18 SPT 54528.

## Governance

32 The school was registered by and accountable to the Ministry of Home Affairs until the end of 1972, when the Northern Ireland Office took over on foot of direct rule.

33 There was a Board of Management in accordance with the Training School Rules. The Board was chaired by the current Roman Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor and it was made up of local clergy. On 2 February 1954 the Board considered a letter from the Ministry of Home Affairs, drawing to their attention the Rule that at least two members of the Board had to be women. By way of response:

“The Manager was instructed to write to the Ministry informing them that the Board did not consider it advisable to change its present constitution.”<sup>19</sup>

There is no evidence that any action was taken to modify the Board membership for over thirty years.<sup>20</sup> Following the critical inspection in 1988 the number of priests on the Board was reduced and the number of lay people increased.<sup>21</sup>

34 The Board was required by the Training School Rules to meet at the school on a monthly basis. During the Troubles they met only every six months, and while this was understandable as travelling was at times difficult, it was also unfortunate as the staff needed additional support at that time. They did not meet, for example, for five months after the death of Bernard Teggart, which is considered in more detail below.

35 The Board had two main subcommittees. One was the Licensing Committee, whose membership included people from the wider community, and it met once a month. It received reports from housemasters, reviewed the progress of boys and recommended their discharge under licence when it felt they were ready to move on.<sup>22</sup> Boys could attend the Committee if they wished. Typically boys had to remain at St Patrick’s for at least a year before they could be discharged, but exceptionally the Committee could seek special dispensation for discharge at an earlier date from the Secretary of State.

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19 SPT 10446.

20 SPT 846.

21 Day 145, p.108.

22 Day 157, pp.61 and 62.

- 36 The second subcommittee was a General Purposes Committee which oversaw the daily life and management of the school.<sup>23</sup> There were also occasional subcommittees set up for specific time-limited purposes, such as the development of the West Side Project.<sup>24</sup>
- 37 SPT 2 said that the staff had very little contact with the Management Committee.<sup>25</sup>

## Finance

- 38 Unlike the large children’s homes with which the Inquiry has had to deal, finance was not generally a major problem at St Patrick’s, possibly because it was fulfilling a statutory role as an industrial school, and from 1950 as a training school. In its earlier years as an industrial school, St Patrick’s was funded in equal measures by capitation grants from central and local government (£1 per week in 1942), with parents contributing when they placed their children voluntarily, though the income was minimal.<sup>26</sup> The School also received at least one legacy, amounting to £2,000.<sup>27</sup> The overriding principle under the 1950 Act was that the funding of training schools was seen as a central government responsibility, and training schools were therefore funded directly. Although there was a point in the 1940s when there were discussions involving the Minister, the funding was generally sufficient to provide acceptable living conditions and the level of staffing deemed necessary at the time. Furthermore, when requests were made for increases in expenditure, St Patrick’s received positive responses.
- 39 While the Diocese of Down and Connor purchased the Glen Road site, it was the government which provided capital for the new building. The Trustees took out a mortgage with the Minister of Finance, and repaid it in annual instalments from the Department’s grant. Further developments were financed in the same way in 1954, 1957, 1968 and 1971, to provide a gate lodge, classrooms, a pre-licence hostel, playing fields and other facilities, as the site was developed.<sup>28</sup> Some difficulties were encountered when the Evangelical Protestant Society objected to the government financing the chapel, but a compromise was reached whereby a gymnasium was financed, which was capable of doubling as a chapel.<sup>29</sup>

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23 Day 157, pp.113 and 114.

24 Day 157, pp.62 and 63.

25 Day 143, pp.100 and 101.

26 RUB 040.

27 SPT 10547.

28 SPT 847, 10001.

29 SPT 847.

- 40 Br Lawrence O’Toole, Assistant General of the Order, was quoted in 1957 as describing the Ministry of Home Affairs as “liberal and benevolent”, a “fairy godmother.”<sup>30</sup> In oral evidence, BR 26 underlined this point, saying that St Patrick’s obtained whatever it needed.
- 41 However, during the 1980s some of the buildings became very run down, and it was only after a critical review in 1990 and some tense negotiations that funding was provided by the government to update the premises in 1992-5, provided £1.9 million to build two extra house units and refurbish two existing ones.<sup>31</sup>

## The Glen Road Buildings and Site

- 42 Prior to the building of St Patrick’s, the Glen Road site had been farmland, and the farm, which was on the northern edge of the premises, remained a working farm. The site as a whole covered 100 acres, which gave considerable scope for development and redevelopment to meet changing needs.
- 43 The approach was by way of a set of gates off Glen Road. There was a gatekeeper’s house, and it was the role of the gatekeeper to check incoming vehicles. There was then a longish drive leading up to the main campus. The main building had two long wings - one for the Senior School and one for the Junior School - separated by a corridor.<sup>32</sup> There were classrooms and other shared facilities on the ground floor, and there were two upper floors of dormitories. On each side there was a pair of dormitories on each floor. The pairs of dormitories were grouped at right angles to each other, forming an L-shape, and at the corner of the L a brother had a bedroom, with internal windows so that he could observe the two dormitories, though later these rooms were used as bases for the nightwatchman or as offices.<sup>33</sup>
- 44 Over time about two dozen other buildings were constructed, scattered around the central campus, providing offices, a house for the brothers, a chapel, a sports hall, a swimming pool, chalets as living quarters for the boys in the later years, schoolrooms and trade training workshops. There were playing fields, and beyond them the fields still used for agriculture. Black Mountain rose up beyond the farm, providing a backdrop for the site as a whole.

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30 SPT 653.

31 SPT 10002.

32 Day 143, pp.29 and 30.

33 Day 140, p.38.

- 45 Clearly the use of buildings changed in the course of time. In the early decades, as described in the history above, the main building housed the two schools and some of the shared facilities, but several chalets were built to provide a more homely setting for the boys. Two of the chalets in particular figure in the history of allegations of abuse at St Patrick’s - Aisling House, which was used for reception and assessment, and Slemish House, which was initially designated to prepare senior boys for discharge but was later used by the junior school as a small secure unit to offer intensive care. They are described more fully below. The chalets included staff accommodation, and more staff housing was provided nearer the road. The availability of staff accommodation helped to ensure that, in addition to the resident brothers, there were people around to assist in emergencies. However, SPT 2 said that most staff returned to their homes in Belfast, and unlike many similar institutions, St Patrick’s did not become a closed community. Indeed, there was little interaction between the staff of the two schools.<sup>34</sup>
- 46 With such a large site there were a number of ways to enter and leave other than the main drive, and during the Troubles one of these paths became known as the Ho Chi Minh trail because of its clandestine use by soldiers and others at night time. The path led directly across the Monagh Bypass to the Turf Lodge estate, which was nearby, and it was a quick way for absconders to reach the city while avoiding the main drive.<sup>35</sup>
- 47 Towards the end of St Patrick’s existence, as the number of boys was reduced, less was spent on the maintenance of buildings and facilities such as the swimming pool and play hall fell into disuse, reducing the opportunities for activities for the remaining boys, and the main building was demolished in 1996.<sup>36</sup>

## Daily Life

### Admission

- 48 When he was admitted to St Patrick’s in 1957, HIA 314 was shown up to his dormitory and given clothes to change in to:
- “I was given a number and I had to sew that number onto all my clothes. I was given washing and dental gear as well. The clothes were

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34 Day 143, pp.103 and 104.

35 Day 147, pp.138 and 139.

36 Day 143, p.53.

of reasonable quality, I’ll say that much. We had to do our own private washing - our underwear and socks but the big washing like sheets was sent away. Every Friday night we were issued with a linen bag with our clothes in it for the next week and we put our old clothes in the bag to be sent away to be washed.”<sup>37</sup>

### The Daily Round

49 HIA 314 also provided a clear picture of the daily round for the boys:

“The daily routine in the home was we were woken at 5.30 a.m. by a hurley stick being banged along the ends of our beds or a whistle being blown by a civilian worker. We washed and dressed, and then we were sent back to the dorm to clean and tidy and make our beds. We had breakfast after that. We had all our meals in a large dining room. There were four boys at a table and there was always a mad scramble for food, especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays when we got baps. You would have to run to your table, grab your bap and put it down your shirt. We were always hungry in the home.

50 “After breakfast we were put out into the yard, no matter what the weather was like. Then after a period of time we either went to school or to technical workshops. These were both on site. I went to the woodwork shop. Other boys went to the craft workshop where they learned how to weld, and others worked on the farm. I remember I made a statue of the Pope once and a dressing table for one of the Brothers. I used to make racks and things for people on the outside as well who I didn’t know. At school, we were given the strap on our bottoms for any minor offence such as looking at each other in class.

51 “After our workshops, we would be given more work to do like cleaning the corridors, showers, toilets or changing rooms until supper time. After supper we went outside and waited until the civilian workers let us inside to watch television. They had the keys and we would have to stand outside until they decided to let us in. ... If it was raining there was only one place to shelter and we used to fight for that spot but then the Brothers would punish you for fighting.

52 “We were sent to bed very early while it was still daylight outside. We could hear people still playing outside but we had to go to bed. At bedtime the Brothers helped the younger boys into their pyjamas. We had to sleep in pyjamas only and they checked you weren’t wearing your underwear underneath. One of the civilian staff patrolled the

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37 SPT 001-002.

dorms regularly during the night. The lights were never put out; there was always a light in the form of a statue in the centre of the floor on a pedestal.”<sup>38</sup>

HIA 314 had sadly died before giving evidence, and so it was not possible to obtain his oral evidence, but we noted the Order’s comment that he maintained contact with St Patrick’s, and in particular Br Stephen, after he had left.

53 HIA 282, in explaining his fear of the brothers, described bedtime:

“Christian Brothers would come round to turn the lights out ... Once we knew a Brother was coming you could have heard a pin drop in that dormitory and before he turned to go into that dormitory everybody was in bed and ninety per cent of the boys were lying on their side with their eyes closed pretending to be asleep, that’s how terrified they were of the Brothers. We would have been sitting on somebody’s bed talking away and we were like rockets getting into bed. If you were not in bed he would have used the strap to slap your leg.”<sup>39</sup>

### Food

54 There were witnesses who said that they always felt hungry or that the quantity of food was insufficient, but these did not seem to be their main complaints and did not amount to neglect.

### Clothing

55 SPT 2 said that the nuns used to keep a stockpile of clothing from which the boys were kitted out, but that after he had observed child care practice in children’s homes on his qualifying course he introduced supervised shopping for clothes in shops in Belfast. He said that changes of this sort were introduced through staff meetings, and that the younger brothers were more prepared to change.<sup>40</sup>

### Religious Observance

56 In the earlier years Mass was said daily, with the Angelus in the evening.<sup>41</sup> In later years compulsory Mass was limited to Wednesday evenings and Saturdays. On these occasions all the boys attended from both senior and junior sides, or later the care and justice units.<sup>42</sup> Unlike the

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38 SPT 002-003.

39 SPT 043.

40 Day 143, p.38.

41 SPT 006.

42 Day 145, p.33.



evidence concerning some other children’s establishments, there were no complaints from former St Patrick’s boys about the level or type of religious observance required of them.

### Schooling and Vocational Training

- 57 Although they spent much of their week time in classrooms, the witnesses did not make much mention of schooling. According to HIA 272 the school was “massive”:

“There were around thirty boys in each class and in my time there the boys moved from class to class for different subjects rather than staying in the same classroom”.

The teachers included both brothers and lay staff. He did not recall ever having any homework in the evenings, and at times he was given domestic chores to do instead of schooling.<sup>43</sup> Some witnesses alleged that they were diverted from the classroom onto work around the school, such as cleaning or laundry.<sup>44</sup>

Classes in the junior school were reported to have been divided by ability. HIA 227 described the quality of education as “basic” and noted the absence of homework.<sup>45</sup>

- 58 SPT 125 said that on admission to St Patrick’s he had not been considering higher education as an option, but influenced by the advice of BR 26 he stayed on to do A Levels, attending a day school run by the De La Salle Order in Andersonstown. He also read a lot, and thinks he was seen by the other boys as an oddity. Having done clerical work in a temporary summer job, he stayed in post rather than go to university, and went on to have a successful career in the Health Service. Indeed, SPT 125 felt he achieved more than if he had not attended St Patrick’s.<sup>46</sup>
- 59 When the new school was planned, vocational training was to be offered in woodwork, metal work, French-polishing, shoe-making and tailoring.<sup>47</sup> Among the trades taught in the senior school were brick-laying, painting, farming and joinery.<sup>48</sup> HIA 314 was taught cabinet-making and he was doing well, so they decided to keep him on.<sup>49</sup> Indeed the quality of the

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43 SPT 082-083.

44 Day 138, pp.155 and 156.

45 Day 140, p.118.

46 Day 140, pp.71, 74, 84, 92, 102.

47 SPT 10006.

48 Day 143, p.32.

49 SPT 49452.

training received by St Patrick’s boys was such that employers sought them.

### Activities

60 BR 26 said that there was a considerable emphasis on sport and recreation, and that St Patrick’s achieved a good reputation. Teams were invited in to play St Patrick’s, and “the home boys were the team to beat.”<sup>50</sup> There were weekly trips to the cinema and to swimming baths. BR 43 taught swimming and BR 94 said that the School was barred from competitions for winning too much.<sup>51</sup> There were summer holidays at Glenariff in a house leased from Senator Joseph Maguire, where the boys stayed in groups of forty for a month at a time.<sup>52</sup> In 1946 a band was set up by SPT 90, with up to fifty members, and they travelled widely to give performances.

### Medical Care

61 We have received no significant complaints about the medical and nursing care provided by St Patrick’s. From 1945 there were two nuns of the Bon Secours Order who acted as nurses, but they were withdrawn in 1975 because of a shortage of nuns and their place was taken by members of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, who assisted in housemothering.<sup>53</sup> As described below, HIA 314 alleged that the nuns did not pass on his complaint about abuse. A doctor visited weekly.

62 When necessary, hospital care was arranged. HIA 219 had longstanding problems with soiling. He was referred to the Royal Victoria Hospital, and it is clear that the staff were persistent in helping him overcome this problem.<sup>54</sup> In an inspection report dated 29 November 1950 the introduction of the bell and pad system to deal with enuresis was recommended as it was then being trialled by the Ministry.<sup>55</sup>

### Overview of Daily Life

63 Clearly, the daily round changed over time, in particular with the opening of the chalets, but the picture provided by other witnesses was broadly consistent with HIA 314’s account. Staffing was thin at that time and the

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50 Day 157, p.27.

51 Day 147, p.42.

52 RUB 061.

53 RUB 064.

54 SPT 47883-47926.

55 SPT 10384-10385.

school’s finances would have been stretched, but HIA 314’s only criticism of living standards was that he was always hungry. The daily round was organised to ensure that necessary tasks were all fulfilled, that the boys had a range of activities (household tasks, class work, trade training, time out of doors and leisure), and that supervision was maintained. The picture presented by HIA 314 and others is of a well organised institution, set up to deal with boys who could present difficult behaviour, which functioned in accordance with the standards of the time, and it seems that it ran smoothly.

## Case Management

- 64 Rule 46 of the Training School Rules placed a long-standing obligation on the Managers to review boys’ progress and provide aftercare. As social services were developed and the number of social workers grew, they took on the responsibility of family case work and care planning in children’s homes, but in training schools the responsibility remained with the Board of Management and the staff. When a boy was admitted to St Patrick’s the welfare authority closed the case. This meant that contact with the boys’ families was maintained by the staff of St Patrick’s. They called on families in their homes, they got to know the sorts of places where boys socialised or congregated when in the community, they escorted boys to and from court, and they collected absconders. SPT 2 said that he maintained contact either when families visited the school or on home visits. He spent Wednesdays regularly in Derry, visiting boys’ homes there.<sup>56</sup>
- 65 Within St Patrick’s there were three systems for assessing the progress of boys. The first was the Licensing Committee, a subcommittee of the Board of Management, which had the responsibility of complying with the Rules by reviewing the progress of the boys at intervals and determining whether they were ready to be discharged under licence. Reports were prepared by the staff of the boys’ units. Once they were discharged, while the boys’ licences were extant they could be recalled to complete the period granted by their Training School Order at St Patrick’s. HIA 314, for example, was released on licence to the care of his father on 11 May 1961.<sup>57</sup>

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56 Day 143, pp.101 and 102.

57 SPT 49477.

- 66 Secondly, there appears to have been a review system run by the staff which was similar to that organised by field social workers for children living in children’s homes. It appears to have considered boys’ progress in more detail, including day-to-day problems and needs. It does not seem to have had any powers to decide on issues such as discharge, and it is not clear whether it had any links at all with the Licensing Committee.
- 67 Thirdly, within Slemish House, which provided short-term intensive care, there was a separate system to review progress with a view to returning boys to the units from which they had been referred. Again, this system was run by the staff, and included not only the staff from Slemish House but also the boys’ keyworkers.

## Family Contact

- 68 On 20 September 1994 BR 90 wrote:

“We believe that weekend leave is a vitally important part of a child’s care programme. In situations where contact with the home have broken down priority is given to the restoration of these. Experience has taught us that where home leave is not possible children become highly institutionalised and inadequate.”<sup>58</sup>

He stressed the care that was taken to check families out, to explain expectations to them, to ensure that boys would be safe and to support the family, especially if things went wrong.

- 69 BR 90 was right to stress the importance of maintaining home contact, as it is one of the main predictors of successful outcomes for children in residential care. As many of the boys at St Patrick’s came from Belfast, going home presented few logistical problems for them and they spent their pocket money on bus fares home. This was treated as a privilege, which encouraged boys to earn sufficient points to be allowed home, but it was a privilege which was widely granted, such that there were sometimes only a few boys left in units at St Patrick’s at weekends, mainly those who had no home to go to or who were from more distant parts of the province.
- 70 While the boys visited their homes at weekends, many were also visited mid-week by their families, and there was said to be a trail of visitors walking up the road from the bus every Wednesday evening, often bringing extra food for the boys.<sup>59</sup>

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58 SPT 12895.

59 Day 139, p.105

- 71 The contact with families was a positive feature of the care of the boys at St Patrick’s, and was the other side of the coin from their absconding, which is discussed below. The use of a points system to earn the privilege was a way of controlling the boys’ movements by regulating their home contact. This practice contrasted sharply with that at Rubane, where the home’s siting in the countryside reduced the likelihood of absconding but also made contact with families much more difficult, whether it was a matter of the boys travelling to Belfast or their families using public transport to get to Rubane. St Patrick’s boys’ frequent contact with their families may also have had an impact on the likelihood of boys being abused, either physically or sexually, in view of their frequent opportunities to disclose to their parents.

## Management of Behaviour and Punishments

### Points System

- 72 There was a points system to regulate behaviour and encourage good conduct. Every Thursday there was a meeting attended by all the staff at which points were awarded for the boys’ behaviour in different areas of activity such as the classroom and their house unit. Points were lost for fighting or disruptive behaviour. The boys then queued in the gym and they were paid pocket money and allowed to go home, depending upon the points they had accrued.<sup>60</sup> HIA 100 said that he never remembered getting the full amount of pay, which in the mid 1960s was three shillings and threepence, and there were weeks when he had no pay. He got home most weekends, but there were occasions when he was “stewed”, that is, grounded.<sup>61</sup>

### Detention Rooms

- 73 There appear to have been rooms in which boys could be held securely throughout the history of St Patrick’s and they were subject to the Training School Rules issued in 1952.<sup>62</sup> Rule 39 (d) stated that separation should be exceptional and was subject to a number of conditions:
- I. “No boy or girl under the age of twelve shall be kept in separation.
  - II. The room used for the purpose shall be light and airy and kept lighted after dark.

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60 Day 143, pp.34 to 36.

61 SPT 052.

62 SPT 1611.

- III. Some form of occupation shall be given.
- IV. Means of communication with a member of staff shall be provided.
- V. If the separation is to be continued for more than 24 hours, the written consent of the Board of Management shall be obtained and the circumstances shall be reported immediately to the Ministry.”

74 We have no information about any secure rooms at the Milltown site, but there were cells sited near the kitchen when the school moved to Glen Road. From the descriptions given by witnesses these rooms did not meet the requirements laid down in Regulation 39(d) of the 1952 Training School Rules.<sup>63</sup> The light was said to have filtered through frosted glass bricks, and the rooms were not “light and airy”. According to HIA 162 he was not given “some form of occupation” while in secure accommodation, nor were there any means to communicate with staff. There was a hard bed with half a mattress, no food and no call system. He added that he was held in the secure accommodation for three or four days, which the Brothers denied.<sup>64</sup> HIA 58 said that this room was known as the “sick bay”.<sup>65</sup> “That room was part of my life for two years.”<sup>66</sup> HIA 58 was at St Patrick’s in the late 1960s; by the early 1970s, according to HIA 272 these rooms were no longer in use. They were abandoned because, being near the boiler house, they were subject to fumes.<sup>67</sup> Because of the absence of inspection reports for this period we have found no information to indicate that the Inspectors were concerned about the failure of St Patrick’s to adhere to the Training School Rules in this respect. However, these secure rooms must have been in use for some years, and as the inspectors were regular visitors to St Patrick’s they must have been aware of the conditions in the rooms, and therefore must have condoned their continuing use.

75 **We consider that the failure of St Patrick’s to conform to the Training School Rules in respect of secure accommodation at this time, and of the Inspectorate to note the breaches and take action, constituted systemic abuse.**

76 Detention rooms were then set aside on an upper floor near the dormitories, but according to SPT 3 these were used less, as it was difficult to get a

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63 SPT 80069.

64 SPT 110.

65 Day 139, p.12.

66 Day 139, p.25.

67 Day 147, p.16.

truculent boy up several flights of stairs, and a member of staff had to be designated to oversee the detention, reducing the staff team on duty. Boys were only detained in the cells for a few hours, till they had settled down.<sup>68</sup> SPT 2 said that the rooms were used only half a dozen times during his time at St Patrick’s,<sup>69</sup> which contrasts with the accounts of witnesses who say that they were often placed in the cells, as they were used for absconders.<sup>70</sup> HIA 94 absconded frequently and was placed in one of these isolation rooms<sup>71</sup> where he said he was beaten by two housemasters.<sup>72</sup> SPT 3 said that the use of cells ceased in the late 1970s.<sup>73</sup> Although witnesses differed in their accounts of the frequency with which these rooms were used, there is no evidence that the School failed to comply with the Training School Rules.

- 77 Slemish House, which was opened in 1984 and is discussed in more detail below, had a secure perimeter; the whole house therefore constituted secure accommodation. The report by the Inspectors following SPT 81’s death in 1994 noted the lack of guidelines for secure accommodation and recommended that the Northern Ireland Office should issue guidance for the boards of management of training schools to incorporate into their procedures.<sup>74</sup> They failed to mention the requirements of Rule 39 or that SPT 81, then aged eleven, should not have been placed “in separation”, ie in secure accommodation at all. This matter is dealt with more fully below.

### Corporal Punishment

- 78 Under the Training School Rules there was clear guidance on the way corporal punishment should be administered, which included the canes which could be used, who could administer canings, and how they should be witnessed and recorded. In the classroom, the Education Rules were applied, which differed from the Training School Rules. The De La Salle Order’s guidelines said that corporal punishment should not be used at all. In Northern Ireland the strap appears to have been substituted for the cane. SPT 2 said that he saw the cane used in the late 1960s and the strap was in use in 1971 and that its use was recorded in the punishment book. Although authorised to use it, he rarely did so.

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68 Day 144, pp.18 and 19.

69 Day 143, p.65.

70 Day 139, pp.15 and 16.

71 Day 139, pp.130 and 131.

72 Day 139, pp.142 and 143.

73 Day 144, pp.19 and 20.

74 SPT 12833.

- 79 Witnesses reported that there were times when they were sent to the Brother Director for punishment. HIA 227, for example, was sent two or three times to the headmaster and was punished with the strap on the hand.<sup>75</sup> Formal punishments were recorded and the records were checked by Inspectors; Kathleen Forrest, for example, was reported to have checked the “statutory books” on 29 November 1950.<sup>76</sup> SPT 52 said he witnessed the Principal administering six strokes on the buttocks in the office, and found the experience distressing.<sup>77</sup>
- 80 It should be noted that the Rules specified the use of a light cane, but the De La Salle Brothers used a leather strap. While the Regulations were based on the Approved School Rules relating to England and Wales, where caning was standard practice, in Scotland the tawse was widely used. It is possible therefore, that the strap was generally deemed an acceptable alternative to the cane in Northern Ireland, although this was not made explicit through a formal change in the Regulations. SPT 2 said that he was authorised to use the strap, but rarely did so, and never after 1973 to 1974.<sup>78</sup> SPT 3 said that only senior managers used the strap, in accordance with Training School Rules, and when he was promoted to be a senior member of staff he only used the strap once or twice.<sup>79</sup> The Order accepted that straps were used by teachers and other staff, and that some punishments were not recorded, but it argued that this only occurred as punishment for misdemeanours and was never excessive.<sup>80</sup> HIA 229 said that brothers carried straps in their pockets, between 18 and 24 inches in length, some being rigid and some flexible.<sup>81</sup> However, BR 94 stated that straps were kept in the tuckshop, and that staff were authorised to give boys a slap to check disputes or for bad language.<sup>82</sup>
- 81 It seems that formal corporal punishment went out of fashion and was abandoned around the mid-1970s, although BR 50 said that he witnessed a boy being strapped as late as 1977.<sup>83</sup> BR 26 said that he was personally opposed to corporal punishment as the boys had had “Enough

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75 Day 140, p.121.

76 SPT 10386.

77 Day 144, p.69.

78 Day 143, p.63.

79 Day 144, p.18.

80 SPT 668-669.

81 Day 138, p.19.

82 Day 147, pp.10 and 11.

83 Day 146, pp.114 and 115.



of violence in their lives already”.<sup>84</sup> Corporal punishment in the classroom was not permitted following its abolition under the Education (Corporal Punishment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. Corporal punishment was still permitted by the Training School Rules up to the point of St Patrick’s closure in 1996.<sup>85</sup>

82 The majority of the corporal punishment described by the witnesses, however, appears to have been informal. BR 94 accepted that he used the strap “sparingly” in this way.<sup>86</sup> It was an instantaneous response to a situation by both brothers and lay housemasters, sometimes accepted by the boys as a just punishment for misbehaviour but sometimes appearing to be unjustified and gratuitous, which was resented. HIA 282, for example, said that he was smacked and kicked for no reason.<sup>87</sup> HIA 314 said brothers hit the boys with keys, sticks and leather straps, often for no reason.<sup>88</sup>

83 During much of St Patrick’s history, the use of informal corporal punishment was typical of many day schools and families; it was an accepted part of the culture, and in this respect it could be said that the staff of St Patrick’s were reflecting accepted ways of dealing with misbehaviour. However, during the period covered by the bulk of the allegations, such punishment breached the Training School Rules, it was contrary to the Order’s guidelines, and it was unacceptable as professional child care practice.

84 **We consider the use of informal corporal punishment was systemic abuse.**

### Supervision of Dormitories

85 HIA 100 said that boys were put in charge of the dormitory and if there was misbehaviour a boy might be made to kneel in front of a statue of St Patrick in the middle of the dormitory and pray with his back “bolt upright”. If a boy then slouched he was made to kneel on the tiles in the corridor “all night”. Kneeling for long periods was most unpleasant for the boys affected and although schools often designated older boys as prefects it was unacceptable practice to delegate authority to punish other boys in this way. The brothers whose rooms were attached to the dormitories had

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84 Day 147, p.72.

85 Day 145, p.8.

86 SPT 2176.

87 Day 141, p.81.

88 SPT 010.

a small window with a venetian blind so that they could observe the boys’ behaviour, and they therefore should have been aware of this practice.<sup>89</sup>

- 86 HIA 272 spoke of being made to kneel on the floor for two hours in the event of misbehaviour at night, and added:

“In other cases if anyone misbehaved they waited until about three or four in the morning and they brought everyone down and put us through cold showers. ...it could have happened maybe three or four times in six months.”<sup>90</sup>

This type of punishment was unacceptable both because of the inhumanity of depriving boys of sleep in this way and because a whole group should not be punished for the misbehaviour of individuals. The Order is of the opinion that this recollection is inaccurate, partly because every dormitory would have been visited by the night supervisors every thirty minutes, and partly because no other witness recalled this type of punishment.

- 87 As variants on this account were provided by other witnesses, it appears to have been standard practice and it could therefore be termed systemic. Furthermore, under Rule 45 of the Training School Rules, it was stated:

“No pupil shall be allowed to administer any form of punishment to any other pupil.”<sup>91</sup>

- 88 **We consider that permitting older boys to punish others when supervising them in the dormitory was a breach of the Training School Rules and was systemic abuse.**

### Other Informal Punishments

- 89 HIA 229, for instance, resented the action of ‘Br Philip’ when he had been given permission to return late after a concert:

“‘Br Philip’ removed my mattress and my bedding and I was forced to sleep on the springs. ...This was the type of punishment for no reason which some Brothers really enjoyed.”<sup>92</sup>

The Order have told us that there was no Br Philip at St Patrick’s. HIA 229’s account suggests that, whichever brother was involved, this action was an inappropriate and spiteful misuse of authority, and so clearly constituted unacceptable practice, but there is no other evidence to confirm that it

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89 SPT 048.  
90 SPT 080.  
91 SPT 1612.  
92 SPT 010

was more than a one-off incident and we do not regard it as systemic abuse.

90 HIA 275 said that towards the end of the 1980s:

“I was stripped naked and forced to stand in the corner of the common room for hours on end. I was told it was to stop me running away so much. ...This type of punishment happened on at least seven or eight occasions”. The member of staff responsible was HIA 275’s keyworker, and HIA 275 considered him a bully.<sup>93</sup>

91 Frequent absconding must have been exasperating to staff, and they may have been at their wits’ end to know how to help HIA 275 settle. However, his keyworker should have been the person to whom HIA 275 could turn for support and care, rather than his main tormentor. The punishment applied was humiliating, cruel and counter-productive as well. **The humiliation of stripping a boy naked to stand in full view on a number of occasions constituted systemic abuse.** Other examples of informal punishments are dealt with below under the heading of physical abuse.

## The Impact of the Troubles on St Patrick’s

92 The Troubles commenced in 1969 and continued with varying levels of unrest and violence throughout the remainder of the existence of St Patrick’s. They had a direct impact on the school in a number of ways. As noted above, St Patrick’s was sited on the south-west edge of the city of Belfast and some of the most dangerous areas during the Troubles were within walking distance of the school. Indeed, there was an army base sited next to St Patrick’s, and the School was hit once by crossfire, and damage was done to the brickwork.<sup>94</sup> As the staff were aware, the families of some of the boys were seriously affected: some were threatened and told to leave their homes. In other cases, houses, and indeed streets, were burnt out, so that in Belfast a great many families had to be rehoused.<sup>95</sup> In some cases the fathers and brothers of boys at St Patrick’s were arrested. Boys were understandably worried about their families’ safety, and this was said to be one cause of absconding.<sup>96</sup>

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93 SPT 19

94 Day 148, p.103.

95 SPT 141.

96 Day 157, pp.40 and 41.

- 93 There were reports that gangs of men infiltrated the premises at St Patrick’s, and this frightened the boys. HIA 162 wrote:

“The major problem I had during that time was with the IRA. I know that on one occasion the night watchman allowed masked men into the dormitory where I slept in order to give me a punishment beating. There were a number of other boys around when these masked men arrived and there was a mass fight. The masked men then made off because of the commotion. There were never any Brothers around when this was happening. The nightwatchman later told me they would say I was found wandering outside the dormitory.”<sup>97</sup>

In oral evidence HIA 162 said that the masked men got in through a door which was normally locked, and the brothers were all absent at the time.<sup>98</sup>

- 94 BR 26 recalled a time when two paramilitaries called and requested two boys to help with an assignment. He told them that he would need to seek parental permission first and “luckily” they left.<sup>99</sup> The army would not permit them to shut the gates, and so people visited St Patrick’s in stolen cars. The army also made a hole in St Patrick’s perimeter fence. In the circumstances BR 26 felt that there was “only so much that they could do.”<sup>100</sup>

- 95 This was not just a question of infiltration from outside. HIA 162 continued:

“The Training School had a number of boys who had been remanded there due to suspected involvement with paramilitaries. There was a lot of Republican involvement in the school at the time and the Brothers seemed to let them do what they wanted and seemed to support them. I had the impression that they were treated a lot better than people such as myself who were not involved in that type of activity. ...The Brothers became very anti-IRA after a while.”<sup>101</sup>

- 96 This was echoed by HIA 54, who saw St Patrick’s as:

“a recruiting ground for Fianna Eireann, the junior wing of the Provisional IRA”.

He was approached by another boy with recruiting material, but rejected the approach. Like HIA 162 he considered the brothers to be sympathetic

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97 SPT 108.

98 Day 140, p.37.

99 Day 157, p.36.

100 Day 157, p.39.

101 SPT 108.

to boys who were in St Patrick’s for paramilitary crimes and they “seemed to get an easier time.”<sup>102</sup>

97 In oral evidence BR 26 said that at one point a group of senior boys planned to set up an IRA unit in the school and abduct staff. BR 52, who was then the Principal, went to the Northern Ireland Office where a civil servant gave BR 52 Máire Drumm’s phone number. They met in Andersonstown and she then met the head of the group, telling him to forget the idea.<sup>103</sup> BR 26 observed that the Brothers had no preparation for dealing with such things.<sup>104</sup>

98 In the wider community, the republican movement was split into the Provisional IRA, the Official IRA and other factions, and a bitter internecine war was being fought. This was at times replicated within St Patrick’s. HIA 162 again:

“There were gangs at St Patrick’s and there was a lot of bullying. The brothers knew what was going on and they watched from the sidelines. They only intervened if things got very serious.”<sup>105</sup>

BR 26 acknowledged this problem, and spoke of factions within the boys’ group, with different allegiances making the situation very volatile.<sup>106</sup>

99 When absconding, there was always the risk that boys would become involved in further offending or behaviour which put them at risk. Joy-riding became popular; cars were frequently stolen, ridden around at speed and then burnt out. Indeed, it became necessary to carry a passenger to mind one’s car when shopping or going on errands to prevent it being stolen. It was illegal to leave unattended parked cars in the city centre, and drivers could be fined or their cars might be destroyed by the army. At St Patrick’s brothers took boys with them to mind the school’s car or to undertake the errands while they remained with the vehicle.

100 In addition to the men who infiltrated the school, there were army patrols, and the boys, some of whom had been involved in rioting before admission to St Patrick’s, at times threw stones at them. The Brother Director spoke to the army officer responsible, who was very courteous, to persuade him to reduce patrols, but the immediate effect was that patrols were increased in size.

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102 SPT 152.

103 Day 148, pp.104 and 105.

104 Day 148, p.107.

105 SPT 107.

106 Day 157, p.35.

- 101 For some boys, the school acted as a refuge from the Troubles. HIA 272, for example returned from absconding as the “Fianna boys” were going to give him a hiding. SPT 125 said that, but for the advice of BR 26 to keep his head down, he might well have been sucked into involvement in civil disorder.<sup>107</sup> For others, such as HIA 162, the Troubles provided cover when they absconded and were running wild, as they were able to stay in areas where the police would not come.<sup>108</sup>
- 102 BR 26 said that the introduction of the Diplock courts caused St Patrick’s considerable difficulties. First of all, the school was faced with additional demand for places. At one time they had eight boys in their care on murder charges. On another occasion, after civil disturbance they were required to admit 23 boys. Furthermore, boys on remand were meant to be kept on the premises and not allowed home leave. This was contrary to the St Patrick’s practice of maintaining close home contact and added to tension when remanded boys could see others visiting their families. In some cases remands were extended repeatedly, and BR 26 raised the matter with the Director of Public Prosecutions.<sup>109</sup> The regulations were not changed, but BR 26 did admit that occasionally they overlooked a boy’s remand status in permitting him to leave the premises, for example as a member of a football team.<sup>110</sup>
- 103 BR 26 described the situation as “hugely difficult”; they just hoped that tomorrow would not be as bad as yesterday. He felt that they had been very successful; for example, when they had the 26 boys on remand, they managed to get 24 of them to court despite the open nature of the school.<sup>111</sup> The brothers were in an extremely difficult predicament. They were clearly part of the Catholic community, and as such, no doubt had sympathies with the plight of the Catholics who were rendered homeless or who were victims of shootings. On the other hand St Patrick’s played an important role in the justice system; the school needed to co-operate with the courts, the police and in some instances the prison system. They have pointed out that on two occasions soldiers accidentally left weapons on the premises and that both times the guns were handed in.<sup>112</sup>

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107 Day 140, p.77.

108 Day 140, p.33.

109 Day 157, pp.100 and 101.

110 Day 157, pp.103 and 104.

111 Day 157, p.34.

112 Day 140, p.47.

104 BR 94 said that he thought the staff deserved credit for “keeping a lid” on the factions among the boys during the Troubles. Fr Timothy Bartlett wrote on behalf of the Diocese of Down and Connor that they were:

“acutely aware of the outstanding efforts that were made by the staff and Managing Board of St Patrick’s during those uniquely turbulent and dangerous years to maintain a professional and stable environment for the residents there in the midst of the most challenging circumstances, including a prevailing culture of armed intimidation and threat by paramilitary organisations.”<sup>113</sup>

We concur with their views.

105 Individual members of staff faced similar difficulties. They lived in the community and had to travel to St Patrick’s to work, and no doubt had concerns for their own safety and that of their families.

106 All of these factors would have been elements in the backdrop at the time of the most serious incident during the Troubles, the abduction and murder of Bernard Teggart.

## **The Death of Bernard Brendan Teggart**

107 Gerard and Bernard Teggart were twin brothers, and members of a family of thirteen children living in a socially deprived area. Their father was shot dead by the Army on 9 August 1971. The two brothers both had learning difficulties and were functioning at the level of much younger children. They were involved in petty offending and were first admitted to St Patrick’s on 17 April 1968. They spent some time also at Rubane and were returned home, but were readmitted to St Patrick’s on 22 April 1970 under Training School Orders.<sup>114</sup>

108 On Sunday 11 November 1973 a teacher, SPT 151 found three Provisional IRA men questioning Gerard in the woodwork room and they demanded that he should accompany them for an hour for questioning. SPT 151 told the men that Gerard had learning difficulties and was vulnerable, but despite his attempts to stall, they were insistent and he reluctantly agreed that Gerard should accompany them. Gerard was returned to the school an hour later as promised. SPT 151 informed BR 52, then the Principal of St Patrick’s, and no further action was taken.<sup>115</sup>

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113 SPT 3018.

114 SPT 2119.

115 SPT 2124.

- 109 The next day, 12 November, two different men came to the school and initially asked to take Bernard away for questioning, but then confirmed that it was Gerard who was wanted for questioning. On this occasion the Principal, BR 52, was involved, and he attempted to dissuade them, but the men appeared to be threatening and possibly armed, and reluctantly he agreed. BR 52 then left the school and went to a pre-arranged meeting in Newtownards. While he was away other men came to the school and took Bernard away for questioning. SPT 151 explained to the police that he allowed this to happen on the basis that BR 52 had previously agreed that the men could take Gerard out of the school.<sup>116</sup> SPT 151 explained that he became concerned when two hours had passed and the boys had not been returned and he consulted with brothers in the main office about contacting BR 52 and/or informing the police but was told to do neither thing in the meantime. BR 52 returned to the school around 5 pm, but the police were not informed about the abductions.
- 110 The two boys were moved around the city from house to house and were questioned. Eventually, Gerard was taken to a main road, given three shillings and an anorak; as he left, he could hear Bernard crying and screaming. He made his way home and told his mother what happened.<sup>117</sup>
- 111 When the twins were not returned by 6 pm that evening, BR 52 made enquiries, visiting the boys’ home and other possible haunts.<sup>118</sup> Gerard was found asleep at home, but Bernard was not to be found. It was later that his body was discovered in Bellevue Park, with a label “tout” (meaning an informer) placed beside him. Bernard had been shot in the head at about 10 pm but was still alive; he was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital by ambulance, where he died in the early hours of next morning, 13 November 1973.<sup>119</sup> His body was identified by the St Patrick’s laundry mark, 106, on his clothes.<sup>120</sup> Dr Carson, the Deputy State Pathologist, conducted a post mortem and recorded death by “a gunshot wound to the head.”<sup>121</sup> BR 52 informed the Bishop, but not the police. It was at first thought by the police that the twins had absconded from St Patrick’s and they were described by the police as “escapees”; the fact that they had been abducted only came to light later when the boys’ sister told the police.<sup>122</sup>

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116 SPT 27020.

117 SPT 2121.

118 SPT 2127-2128.

119 SPT 2121, 2128, 2129.

120 SPT 2133.

121 SPT 2131.

122 SPT 2133, 2134, 2136.



- 112 The reason for the abductions, questioning and murder is not clear, but it is assumed that Bernard was seen by the Provisional IRA as an informer.<sup>123</sup>
- 113 This tragic event had considerable consequences. There were 263 murders that year in the Troubles, nine of which took place in Belfast that month, but Bernard’s case was different and there was major public outcry. On 17 November 1973 a group of priests (Fr Denis Faul of Dungannon and Frs Aodh Bennett and Alexander Reid of Clonard Monastery) wrote to the *Belfast Telegraph*, posing four questions:
- “(1) What kind of an organisation would feel threatened by a boy with the mental age of eight?
  - (2) What kind of ‘justice’ did this boy receive who was ill-treated and murdered without trial?
  - (3) What kind of moral standards operate in people who are responsible for this child murder?
  - (4) What kind of Irishman would condone, support or be associated with the people who did this deed?”<sup>124</sup>
- 114 The Historical Enquiries Team, which was set up to investigate unsolved cases from the Troubles, was critical of St Patrick’s when it reviewed the case sometime after 2009:
- “The school had a duty of care to the boys. ...That duty of care was not exercised when the school allowed the abductions, although [SPT 151] gave context to the difficulties the school was facing. His description of suspected terrorists entering the school on a regular basis demonstrates very intimidating and uncomfortable times. He also pointed out that co-operation with these groups in the past had never resulted in such tragedy.”
- 115 “The RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] investigation team were very concerned at the time about the conduct of the school, its failure to give the true circumstances of the abductions and its lack of co-operation after the murder.”<sup>125</sup>
- 116 It was reported in the press that the Ministry of Home Affairs undertook an inquiry into Bernard’s death, but the Historical Enquiries Team could not find a copy of their report, and concluded that the school “failed

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123 SPT 2149.

124 SPT 2157.

125 SPT 2151.

lamentably” in its duty of care to Bernard.<sup>126</sup> It was 10 May 1974 before the Board of Management met, and their discussion then focused on a claim for compensation. At that time nine boys in the school were there because of charges of murder or attempted murder and eight were on firearm charges; Board members expressed concern that such boys were in the school.<sup>127</sup>

- 117 Bernard’s murderer has never been identified, but in October 2004 the IRA issued an apology, saying that “the killing should not have happened.”<sup>128</sup> About 2009 the Historical Enquiry Team investigated Bernard’s murder; despite the preparation of a full report they were unable to add to the known facts.<sup>129</sup>
- 118 In his evidence to the Inquiry BR 52, who left the Order in 1979 to become a teacher, expressed profound regret for having let Bernard down, saying that his memories tormented him.<sup>130</sup> That he permitted the abduction of Bernard and failed to report the three abductions to the police is clear, but his predicament when faced with the abductors was not something for which he could have been prepared. Nor was he well supported; he said that between Board meetings (which at that time took place twice a year) he had no contact with the Bishop or the Board members.<sup>131</sup> Whatever BR 52 had decided to do, St Patrick’s was in a situation of exceptionally high risk at that time, and any judgement of his conduct now has the benefit of over forty years’ hindsight. We acknowledge that BR 52’s predicament was unenviable.
- 119 **The failure to report the abductions to the Police, however, was clearly a systemic failure on the part of the Brother Director. The failure of the Board of Management to meet immediately after the boy’s death, constituted a systemic failure to investigate the incident, and to ensure that the training school provided proper care and support for both staff and boys at such a critical time.**
- 120 **There is nothing to suggest that the NIO took any steps to investigate whether any policies or procedures needed to be changed to protect boys from suffering a similar fate, and their failure to do so represents a systemic failing on their part.**

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126 SPT 2151.

127 SPT 80296.

128 SPT 2140.

129 SPT 2111-2162.

130 Day 148, p.127.

131 Day 148, p.131.

## Absconding

- 121 Absconding appears to have been the biggest behavioural problem for St Patrick’s, and the school’s failure to address the problem is probably its most significant shortcoming. BR 26 said that absconding was not a problem during the 1950s when the school was at Milltown, as the boys liked to be there, since there was little for them at home.<sup>132</sup> Absconding appears to have been persistent at the Glen Road site, however, throughout the period covered by the evidence of witnesses. BR 26 said that from the 1960s and 1970s onwards the boys had a ‘devil may care’ attitude and were fairly wild and untamed, being used to freedom.<sup>133</sup>
- 122 Several witnesses absconded on multiple occasions while at St Patrick’s. A random selection of records showed that HIA 26 absconded 11 times, HIA 272 19 times, HIA 282 9 times and HIA 384 a total of 17 times.<sup>134</sup> At times, boys ran away in groups of eight or ten, with 12 on 8 October 1979,<sup>135</sup> and some frequent absconders were said to be absent more often than they were present. Again, a random selection of months indicates 38 abscondings in February 1974, 33 in April 1976 and 40 in October 1979.<sup>136</sup> In total, 353 abscondings were reported in the first six months of 1994, and 28 in the two months prior to SPT 81’s death.<sup>137</sup> The problem appears to have been persistent.
- 123 This pattern of behaviour is important for seven reasons:
- (a) The courts had committed the boys to the care of St Patrick’s, and the court orders were being breached when they were absent.
  - (b) Absence from St Patrick’s meant that the boys were at risk; no responsible adult knew where they were and they were vulnerable to exploitation or violence, especially during the Troubles.
  - (c) The boys’ programmes of care, education and trade training were disrupted by abscondings, often at a time when they needed a period of stability in their personal lives and in their education and technical training if they were to achieve success in obtaining employment and living independently on leaving St Patrick’s.

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132 Day 157, p.69.

133 Day 157, p.70.

134 SPT 45052, 48978, 48251, 50117.

135 SPT 18155

136 SPT 18202, 18188, 18155.

137 SPT 12641.

- (d) Absconding often signifies problems from which children are running. Several of the witnesses attributed the start of their absconding to sexual or physical abuse.<sup>138</sup>
- (e) Well publicised research in the late 1970s showed that boys who absconded frequently committed offences, especially if they were living rough and needed money or food to survive. Some boys without previous criminal records started to offend when absconding. Offending of this sort was correlated with persistent offending as an adult, with the consequence of prison sentences. Indeed, several of the witnesses to the Inquiry had lengthy records of offending through much of their adult lives. It was therefore of real importance that any tendency to abscond should be countered as early and as effectively as possible if a lifetime of crime were to be avoided.<sup>139</sup>
- (f) Absconding could be contagious; boys who had been progressing well could become unsettled and, if invited or pressured to abscond, they were at risk of accompanying those for whom it was already an established pattern. There was the risk that absconding in St Patrick’s would be perpetuated in this way.
- (g) Further offending inevitably left additional victims of the offences, affecting the reputation of the school in the eyes of the public and the services on whose co-operation St Patrick’s relied; returning boys to St Patrick’s must at times have seemed pointless to the police, when the boys absconded again immediately after the police had left.

124 St Patrick’s faced three major problems in coping with absconding. The first is that, in being sited on Glen Road, it was on the south-western edge of the city of Belfast, a relatively short walk from the homes and haunts of many of the boys. Absconding must therefore have been tempting to any boy who was homesick or who resented curtailment to the freedom he had enjoyed prior to admission.

125 Secondly, the school was an open establishment. There were some locked doors, but it was relatively easy for boys to find a way out and a point in the daily round when they could slip away. Aisling House, for example, had five external doors from which boys could leave. In the early days,<sup>140</sup> according to SPT 3 because of the low staff numbers, boys were “shepherded” in groups from one activity to another by staff, thus reducing

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138 HIA 253, Day 142, p.8.

139 SPT 19777.

140 SPT 12637.

their opportunities to abscond,<sup>141</sup> but as supervision became more relaxed such measures were dropped and it became easier for boys to run away.

- 126 Thirdly, from 1969 onwards Belfast was often in turmoil because of the Troubles, and this impacted on absconding in various ways. As noted above, some of the boys were directly involved in the Troubles themselves, having played minor roles in political organisations and been involved in rioting, and they were sent to St Patrick’s for that reason. They attempted to recruit other boys to join them. They were presumably tempted to leave the school in order to participate in civil disorder or other activities. Indeed the problem was such that General Leng, the Commander Land Forces in the Army in Northern Ireland, later recalled the absconding of “young terrorists” from a remand institution (which we believe was St Patrick’s) as a problem in the 1970s. Other boys may have absconded because they were concerned for the welfare of their families.
- 127 If boys absconded during the Troubles it was more difficult for the staff to travel in some areas of the city in order to search for absconders, and the police too were reluctant to enter some parts without army support, so that absconders were not followed up promptly. The Troubles were themselves unsettling and as noted above there were reports of groups of men from organisations entering the premises at St Patrick’s. Their presence would have left the boys feeling insecure and would have diminished the control exerted by the staff.
- 128 Even allowing for these serious difficulties, the level of absconding at St Patrick’s was unduly high for many years, and it does not seem to have caused sufficient concern to lead to a concerted plan of action to counter it.
- 129 Research has indicated that what are termed ‘institutional controls’ are one of the key factors in reducing absconding. However, they needed to be linked with strong ‘expressive controls’, “to mould and influence children’s moral behaviour, beliefs and interpersonal relationships” in order to be effective.<sup>142</sup> In other words, in addition to physical measures such as locked doors, fences and tight supervision, staff needed to talk to boys, to ensure that they were settled and to find out what could be done if they were unsettled, in order to help them deal with their problems, and in the process to reduce their motivation to abscond.

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141 Day 144, p.9.

142 SPT 19778.

- 130 Some action was taken. Shepherding has been mentioned before, and this was typical of the approach taken in the earlier years in training schools, so that there were fewer opportunities for boys to be unsupervised.
- 131 In attempting to find positive solutions to deal with absconding, the main development in the junior side of St Patrick’s was the opening of Slemish House in 1984, described below. There was concern that frequent absconders were sometimes moving on to the closed establishments of Lisnevin and Hydebank primarily because of their absconding pattern and not because those establishments were more suited to meet the boys’ needs in other ways. Slemish House was secure, but it only had eight beds. It was therefore only able to meet the needs of a small number of boys who were going through a disturbed phase, and its presence may have acted as a deterrent to others. It was not large enough, though, to meet the scale of absconding at St Patrick’s and in the process to break the pattern. The provision of a secure unit was an ‘institutional control’ but it offered the chance for staff to spend time with boys in the unit to discuss their predicament, thus offering ‘expressive controls’ as well.
- 132 There were also informal attempts to punish absconders. HIA 314 said that during his time in the early 1960s absconders’ heads were shaved and one shoe was removed so that the boys could not run.<sup>143</sup> Other witnesses reported that they had to wear shorts after absconding.<sup>144</sup> HIA 162 said that older boys were allowed to beat up absconders.<sup>145</sup>
- 133 Research showed that patterns of absconding varied enormously from one institution to another, sometimes being five or six times higher in one school than other establishments with similar intakes, and there were few factors which appear to be predictors. Two positive factors were that where boys were happy and contented levels of absconding were much lower, and where absconders were welcomed back absconding levels dropped. By corollary, where absconders were moved on, levels were higher.<sup>146</sup> We have insufficient information to judge how happy the boys were at St Patrick’s or to tell what proportion of absconders were passed on to Lisnevin and Hydebank.

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143 SPT 006.

144 Day 139, p.41.

145 Day 140, p.58.

146 SPT 19778.

- 134 SPT 26 thought that absconders were fewer as the occupancy of the school reduced.<sup>147</sup> However, the Inspectors in 1994 concluded that absconding levels were “very high” - a problem which staff found “very difficult to control”, but which should not have been “treated as inevitable”, but was requiring “a more strategic approach.”<sup>148</sup>
- 135 In the Inspectors’ report on SPT 81’s death, it was stated that the SSI had been involved in working with another training school (Rathgael) on the subject of absconding, and a fifteen point strategy had been established which had had some success.<sup>149</sup> This was based on research which had been undertaken by the Adolescent Psychological Research Unit (APRU), which supported training schools in various ways. It was recommended that the strategy should be made available to St Patrick’s as it had been successful in reducing absconding.<sup>150</sup> It is our view that this report should not have been kept confidential, when its findings were clearly of relevance to St Patrick’s, and maybe other training schools and homes. It could have been shared at meetings of the principals of the schools, and a digest of recommended action could have been circulated more widely. In June 1995 the Chief Inspector, Dr Kevin McCoy, sent a minute to Sir John Wheeler, the then Northern Ireland Office Minister, about the report on the death of SPT 81, in which he observed that the “NIO was, of course, already well aware of the high levels of absconding at St Patrick’s.”<sup>151</sup> Unlike Rathgael, however, this awareness had not led to a concerted plan of action to address the problem at St Patrick’s.
- 136 **Statistical returns concerning absconding were provided by St Patrick’s to the NIO and these records would have been open to Inspectors when they visited. Prior to the concern raised by the death of SPT 81 neither the NIO nor the SSI had raised absconding as a major issue with St Patrick’s and we consider this a systemic failure on their part.**
- 137 **The failure to circulate the APRU report’s findings more widely and assist St Patrick’s in finding ways of dealing with persistent absconding was a systemic failure on the part of the NIO.**

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147 Day 145, p.114.

148 SPT 12649.

149 SPT 12642.

150 SPT 12650.

151 SPT 12727.

- 138 **Furthermore, the APRU, which had been set up as a combined unit to support all the training schools and which had undertaken the research on absconding, also failed to share their findings with St Patrick’s, when they must have known that it had a similar problem.**
- 139 In the end, as the numbers of staff increased and the number of boys was reduced, they presumably received closer individual attention, thus providing better ‘expressive controls’, and it has been suggested that the level of absconding diminished when the chalets were opened,<sup>152</sup> though information gathered following the death of SPT 81 does not support this view.
- 140 The level of absconding was seen in professional residential childcare practice as a key indicator for the effectiveness of a home or school, and research suggested that schools with high absconding levels were often failing in other ways as well. In this respect St Patrick’s failed, both because of the scale of absconding and because insufficient countermeasures were developed, which suggests that the problem was not taken seriously enough.
- 141 **It is our conclusion that the failure to take adequate measures to counter absconding constituted systemic abuse, in that it left boys vulnerable in terms of the risks they faced when absconding, in the patterns of criminality which were fostered while absconding, and in the effect of their absconding pattern on their later lives.**

## The Death of SPT 81

- 142 The most tragic instance of absconding led to the death of SPT 81 in 1994. SPT 81 was a boy from Derry and although he was only aged eleven and a half, he was admitted to Aisling House, the assessment unit at St Patrick’s, on 22 July 1994 for assessment following some serious behavioural problems at Harberton House.<sup>153</sup>
- 143 He was encouraged by four other boys to abscond on the afternoon of Sunday 14 August 1994 and they made their way through various parts of Belfast. The absconding had been planned, as SPT 81 had hidden a bag of food and clothes in advance.<sup>154</sup> A member of staff went looking for them, which was good practice, but failed to find them. In the early hours of Monday 15 August in the Falls Road area the boys stole and started

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152 Day 140, p.132.

153 SPT 12626.

154 SPT 12641.



up a car, but SPT 81 was left at the roadside, which upset him. When his companions made a circuit of the streets he jumped out in front of the car and then jumped back. The driver swerved and missed him, but on the third time that this happened, SPT 81 jumped in the direction in which the car swerved, and he was knocked down and killed.<sup>155</sup>

- 144 This tragedy demonstrated the influence of regular absconders on impressionable newcomers and underlined the vulnerability of absconders to serious harm.
- 145 Three inquiries were conducted into the circumstances leading to SPT 81’s death. The first was internal to St Patrick’s, carried out at the request of the Board Chairman by two Board members to consider the role of the school in events. The report essentially described what had happened, and only made one recommendation - that when staff went to get the minibus they should take the boys with them, to maximise supervision.<sup>156</sup>
- 146 The second was undertaken by Bob Bunting, Assistant Director in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, and Mr T. Haverty, Chief Social Work Adviser with the Western Board for the Western Health and Social Services Board, to examine the lead up to SPT 81’s placement at St Patrick’s, and so its contents have little bearing on this chapter.<sup>157</sup>
- 147 The third report was prepared at the joint request of the Criminal Justice Services Division of the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Health and Social Services by the Inspectorate to deal with “a number of matters not fully covered” by the first two reports.<sup>158</sup> It was undertaken by Victor McElpatrick and Chris Walker of the Social Services Inspectorate and Robert Mitchell of the Northern Ireland Office. They were highly critical of St Patrick’s, pointing out that SPT 81’s vulnerability as a new boy to the influence of older established absconders had been underestimated,<sup>159</sup> that records suggested that the seriousness of absconding was not recognised, and that there was little indication that the reasons for a boy absconding were followed up on his return.<sup>160</sup> This was contrary to oral evidence from brothers who said that there was discussion with absconders on their return to understand why they had run away.

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155 SPT 12629-12631.

156 SPT 12897-12903.

157 SPT 18994 – 19053.

158 SPT 12618-12651.

159 SPT 12641.

160 SPT 12642.

- 148 The Inspectors made a total of 23 recommendations, which covered issues as diverse as information leaflets, door alarms, policy matters, staffing and management. They recommended the introduction of an information system “to monitor absconding and develop a strategic approach to tackling the problem”, the sharing of the Rathgael report on absconding, and a “fundamental review of the care arrangements” to identify ways of reducing absconding.<sup>161</sup>
- 149 The incident appears to have led to some tension between the Inspectorate and the NIO, who had expected the report to be more critical of the quality of management at St Patrick’s and appeared to feel that the inspectors themselves had fallen short.<sup>162</sup> Victor McElfatrick responded to these criticisms with a memorandum to the Chief Inspector Dr Kevin McCoy.<sup>163</sup>
- 150 We have already mentioned that St Patrick’s failed to develop a strategic approach to absconding by comparison with Rathgael’s initiative, which had led to an immediate initial reduction in absconding, and we have observed that neither the Inspectorate nor the NIO gave a lead in urging St Patrick’s to address the problem. SPT 81’s death sadly underlines our earlier findings of systemic failure. Until the Inspectors’ report identified the action needed in its 23 recommendations, no comment had been made about the extent of absconding and the risks it posed, either in inspection reports or on receipt of the regular statistical returns.

## Slemish House

- 151 As St Patrick’s was redeveloped, smaller units on a more domestic scale were built with specific purposes in mind. Slemish House was originally used to prepare senior boys for discharge. SPT 2 worked in Slemish House for ten years.<sup>164</sup> He said that it was his idea to use the unit to provide intensive care and security, as there was concern about the number of boys absconding and about the consequent need to transfer some of them to secure establishments such as Lisnevin and Hydebank. This was particularly unfortunate when boys with no history of offending began to offend while absconding and left St Patrick’s with a criminal record, and SPT 2 felt that such transfers were unhelpful and unnecessary. Having

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161 SPT 12833-12834.

162 SPT 1690.

163 SPT 12712.

164 Day 143, p.93.

been promoted to the post of Deputy Head, he took a demotion to establish Slemish House’s new role.<sup>165</sup>

- 152 It was therefore decided (in the late 1980s, though the date is unclear) to open Slemish House as an eight-place unit to hold and contain boys while their futures were planned. This meant:

“... not just physical containment of a body but, perhaps as important, emotional containment, i.e. making the boy feel safe and secure in the knowledge that adults (staff) are capable of exercising control over aspects of his life which, invariably, the boy will not have been coping with either in the community or in previous placements.”<sup>166</sup>

It was felt to be:

“...both damaging and frightening for the child who has not acquired self control to feel out of control.”<sup>167</sup>

It was argued that:

“external control of the boys should primarily be exercised by staff and not the building.”<sup>168</sup>

- 153 A draft of the Slemish House *Staff Handbook and Guidelines* appears to have been written prior to the opening of the unit. It laid out the philosophy of the House, its role, guidelines for admission, the staffing, specialist support, the quality of life in the unit, security and physical controls, the management of children, meetings, education, medical provision, record-keeping, visits, daily routines and rules for the boys. It demonstrated comprehensive planning of the way the unit would be run, and indicated a consistent and coherent approach to the management of difficult behaviour at critical times.<sup>169</sup> The guidelines were intended for a wide range of readerships - primarily the staff working in the unit, but also the boys themselves, their parents and other agencies, and some sections, such as the rules for boys, were directed at particular audiences.
- 154 SPT 2 said that he had been unimpressed by the secure units he had visited in England and Scotland, as they offered no comfort.<sup>170</sup> Although admissions to Slemish House were made at a time of crisis and were short-term, SPT

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165 Day 143, p.39.

166 SPT 18312.

167 SPT 18312.

168 SPT 18312.

169 SPT 18304-18352.

170 Day 143, p.41.

2 wanted boys to be able to settle down.<sup>171</sup> Placement in Slemish House was not intended to be punitive and was to be used only if there were no alternative.<sup>172</sup> Boys could not be admitted direct to Slemish House and those placed there had to have a history of absconding and to be at risk of injuring themselves or others if they were not admitted.<sup>173</sup> An impressive Admissions Panel of nine people was to decide all admissions other than emergencies, including members of the Board of Management, the Social Work Inspectorate and the Adolescent Psychology Research Unit.<sup>174</sup> In an emergency the Director or his Deputy were authorised to approve admissions, but such admissions had to be reviewed every 24 hours.<sup>175</sup> It seems that in practice these guidelines were not always followed.

- 155 In their report on the death of SPT 81 the Inspectorate were critical of the use of Slemish House as a response to misbehaviour. On his first night in Aisling House SPT 81, who was then aged 11, was playing up and using “spicy language” to the Night Supervisor, and he was placed in Slemish House. The Inspectors recommended that the use of secure accommodation in this way should be reviewed<sup>176</sup> and went on to recommend to the Northern Ireland Office that it should issue guidance on the use of secure accommodation in view of the lack of any regulations or guidance.<sup>177</sup> They appear to have overlooked the facts that SPT 81’s placement in Slemish House had breached the school’s own guidance and was contrary to the Training School Rules, 39 (d) (i) which stated that “No boy or girl under the age of twelve shall be kept in separation.”<sup>178</sup>
- 156 Slemish House was seen as part of a continuum of care, with boys returning to open units as soon as it was feasible. Links were to be maintained, therefore, with the boys’ keyworkers from the houses in which they had previously lived.<sup>179</sup> It was anticipated that placement in Slemish House would be short-term, with:

“a gradual decrease of external controls as part of the boy’s growth process and a staged return to greater freedom...”.<sup>180</sup>

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171 Day 143, p.45.

172 SPT 18314.

173 SPT 18315.

174 SPT 18316.

175 SPT 18316.

176 SPT 12640.

177 SPT 12641.

178 SPT 100511.

179 SPT 18315.

180 SPT 18313.

- 157 A straightforward points system was devised, different from that in the main school, and it essentially rewarded good behaviour and penalised misbehaviour. In practice, four levels were identified - green for boys doing well, amber for those with moderate problem behaviour, red for those presenting serious difficulties, and black for the most serious. Boys achieving green were returned to the units from which they had been admitted, though HIA 253 complained that he was continually knocked back.<sup>181</sup> The levels were decided at meetings of the full staff team held on Thursdays, and the boys were informed of the results soon afterwards.<sup>182</sup>
- 158 Boys faced with this system would have known where they stood, and for some boys going through unsettled phases this would have provided security. For those who were going through a seriously disturbed phase, however, points systems could have been irrelevant and the primary task would have been to use professional judgement to match the approach to the individual boy’s needs. While the overall aims of Slemish House indicated an understanding of this type of need, the proposed working methods described in the handbook impress as being at times somewhat inflexible and mechanistic.<sup>183</sup>
- 159 Stringent requirements were laid down to limit the containment of boys in single locked rooms.<sup>184</sup> While arguing that physical restraint should only be used in crises, the guidelines made it clear that:
- “Staff who show fear of this physical restraint may be regarded by the boys as ‘fair game’.”<sup>185</sup>
- Confrontation was seen as “not always avoidable” and confronting boys with their behaviour, describing their actions calmly, was advocated as it helped boys realise that they were not being blindly picked on or criticised.<sup>186</sup>
- 160 Detailed guidance was provided on visits, searching for contraband, the management of keys, the opening of mail in the presence of staff, the use of phones, smoking, the checking of cutlery and prohibited articles.<sup>187</sup> Advice on behaviour management encouraged lining up, calling the group together, phase completion, setting expectations, individual instruction,

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181 Day 142, p.79.

182 Day 143, p.34.

183 SPT 18319-18320, 18328-18329.

184 SPT 18324-18325.

185 SPT 18325.

186 SPT 18330.

187 SPT 18326-18329.

tone setting, diversionary tactics, counselling, isolating boys, observation and the use of humour.<sup>188</sup> Fifteen types of records were to be maintained on boys’ clothing and personal property, daily occurrences, medical provision, visiting, absconding, untoward incidents, the use of lock-up rooms, rewards and cash, searches, fire drills, cutlery checks, occurrences at night, the issue of keys, staff attendance and weekly meetings. Each boy was also to have a daily occurrence clipboard.<sup>189</sup> The daily routine was laid out in detail,<sup>190</sup> and the guidance ended with two pages of rules for boys<sup>191</sup> and a list of twenty-one rights of boys to food, clothing, comfortable accommodation, reviews, education, medical care, safety, access to legal representation, uncensored mail, access to a phone, privacy, access to a social worker, use of a complaints procedure, protection from solitary confinement, access to family and friends when appropriate, diet, companionship, exercise and fresh air, smoking (if over 16), personal possessions, reasons and explanations for plans and decisions, access to personal information and retaining identity and religious beliefs.<sup>192</sup>

161 The advice constituted a blend of common sense and acceptable professional practice, intended to maintain a calm atmosphere in a unit designed to cope with crises and challenging behaviour. One value of such guidelines is that they provide a template for good practice, against which events could be evaluated. How the guidelines were interpreted and implemented in practice could well have been different from the model laid out, as the evidence of witnesses demonstrated.

162 The handbook quoted Professor Masud Hoghugh:

“In the Secure Unit the staff are the fulcrum around which everything rotates for the child.”<sup>193</sup>

When Slemish House was opened, the staff team was drawn from the existing staff at St Patrick’s and three of them gave evidence to the Inquiry. They faced allegations, which are dealt with elsewhere in this chapter, but overall they impressed as competent professionals who remained in post at St Patrick’s for many years and delivered an acceptable quality of service in a very demanding field of work.

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188 SPT 18334-18339.

189 SPT 18344.

190 SPT 18347-18352.

191 SPT 18353-18354.

192 SPT 18355.

193 SPT 18320.

## Aisling House

163 This house was opened in May 1994 as a reception and assessment unit to accommodate 11 ‘care’ boys. It was described by Inspectors as having “a fairly domestic atmosphere” and included offices, a recreation room, dining room, kitchen and single bedrooms for the boys. It had five external doors, and the Inspectors who investigated the death of SPT 81 were concerned that consideration should be given to fitting the doors with alarms so that staff were aware when they were opened. Some doors were locked, but this was more “to prevent the boys gaining access to some rooms rather than to stop them leaving the buildings.”<sup>194</sup>

164 Boys admitted to the unit were initially subject to Place of Safety Orders, which lasted a maximum of 35 days. If it was felt necessary to hold a boy longer, an Interim Order for Detention was sought; this too lasted 35 days and one further consecutive Interim Order could be sought. A boy could therefore be held for a maximum of 15 weeks. By that time a decision should have been made on a long-term care plan, and if a longer period at St Patrick’s was deemed to be in his best interests a Training School Order had to be sought.<sup>195</sup> This system resulted in a considerable amount of movement between St Patrick’s and the courts. In the earlier years the police transported the boys to and fro, but during the Troubles the police were unable to undertake the work without excessive safety precautions, and so the staff conveyed the boys to court.

165 A boy admitted to Aisling House for assessment was allocated a keyworker. The Inspectors observed:

“The keyworker takes a particular interest in the boy during his stay. These responsibilities include the basic tasks such as checking that he had adequate clothing and ensuring that he has an adult in whom he can confide. ...The keyworker role also entails taking the lead in the assessment process. The keyworker attempts to get to know the child both as a member of the group and during one to one sessions which are held once a week. ...Brief reports are written on these sessions...”<sup>196</sup>

Typically residential social workers were keyworkers for three or four boys.

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194 SPT 12637.

195 SPT 12637.

196 SPT 12638.

- 166 The Inspectors examining SPT 81’s death recommended that there should be “a more structured approach” to the assessment process, for example by using a Problem Profile Analysis. Although there were recordings of events which had occurred, “Few conclusions were drawn from them.”<sup>197</sup>
- 167 Aisling House had two secure lockable rooms, known as “quiet rooms”, furnished only with a mattress and a soft upholstered cube. In 1994 the Inspectors noted that the rooms had been used 92 times in the twelve month period from May 1994 to May 1995, but they expressed concern, as confinement in these rooms had been “on occasions as a response to quite minor misbehaviour”, involving “disturbed children ... as young as ten years of age”, though no ten-year-olds had been admitted to St Patrick’s in 1994. They recommended that children should be removed to their bedrooms, accompanied by staff, who should remain with them.<sup>198</sup> In their review of the circumstances surrounding SPT 81’s death, the Inspectorate described some of the practices concerning the separation of children as “unacceptable” and recommended a review of the use of secure accommodation.<sup>199</sup> They failed to observe that under the Training School Rules no child under twelve should have been confined in locked accommodation.
- 168 **We consider that the frequency with which the secure rooms were used and their use for young children, contrary to the Training School Rules, amounted to systemic abuse on the part of St Patrick’s and by the SSI in failing to address this breach of the Rules.**

## Discharge and Aftercare

- 169 Under Rule 47 of the Training School Rules the Board of Management was required to make “every effort” to obtain suitable employment and, where their homes were unsatisfactory, accommodation for young people on leaving. Rule 48 required Boards of Management to provide “a sufficient outfit” and “a reasonable sum for travelling and subsistence”. Rule 49 required Boards to make arrangements for aftercare until the statutory period of supervision expired and to appoint aftercare officers. St Patrick’s appears to have fulfilled these requirements, although, as in other homes we have considered, discharge came as something of a sudden shock to some boys. HIA 100, for example, considered the aftercare he

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197 SPT 12639.

198 SPT 12640.

199 SPT 12640.



experienced in 1966 as ‘risible’.<sup>200</sup> At any one time, therefore, St Patrick’s was responsible for its resident population and a substantial number of boys on after care; at one time, for example, this amounted to 160 residents and 40 on aftercare, making 200 in all.

- 170 As in other homes, about half of the witnesses had problems in adult life with alcohol and/or drug-taking, about half suffered depression or other forms of mental ill-health, and about a third had problems concerning relationships with partners and children. About two-thirds had had lengthy prison records as adults. These figures are inevitably imprecise as they are based on self-reporting, and we are unable to tell whether they represent St Patrick’s clientele as a whole. Since the boys admitted for ‘justice’ reasons often already had substantial offending records, and since for some these were augmented because of involvement in the Troubles, it might be considered unsurprising that they continued in adult life with patterns of behaviour established when they were juveniles. It is significant, though, that for such people St Patrick’s may have contained their behaviour while they were resident but it failed to break their patterns of offending and to help them to adopt and internalise less antisocial values as adults.
- 171 This failure was, however, shared with other similar schools in the United Kingdom. In England and Wales, ‘success’ was judged by the number of children found guilty of offences in the two years following discharge, and the so-called ‘success rate’ was just over 30%. Dissatisfaction with this statistic was one of the factors which led to the closure of most of these schools in England and Wales during the 1970s; by contrast, St Patrick’s remained active, though serving dwindling numbers, till the end of the training school system in 1996.

## Staffing

- 172 Over the period covered by the Inquiry the pattern of staffing changed considerably in four main ways:
- (a) In the early years staffing levels were low. The Castle Priory Report guidelines, which were published in 1968, were adopted and applied to St Patrick’s, and they formed the basis for the staffing establishment until the 1990s.<sup>201</sup> Though the internal inquiry undertaken by two members of the St Patrick’s Board felt that staffing levels were adequate,<sup>202</sup>

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200 Day 138, p.125.

201 SPT 12826.

202 SPT 12902

these levels were criticised by the Social Services Inspectorate as being insufficient when they examined the circumstances surrounding SPT 81’s death in 1994, and they recommended an increase.<sup>203</sup>

- (b) The balance between brothers and lay staff also changed. St Patrick’s may have been staffed entirely by brothers in its early history, but HIA 314, who was admitted to St Patrick’s in 1959, mentions lay staff, and they appear to have been appointed increasingly from about 1970 onwards, as demonstrated in the people who were witnesses. According to SPT 52, more lay staff were appointed during the Troubles, and the staffing establishment was doubled.<sup>204</sup> By the end of the Inquiry’s remit very few of the staff were brothers.
- (c) In the 1980s there was a concerted effort to improve the level of training, both at qualifying level and in-service, at St Patrick’s. A work-based qualifying programme was established in conjunction with Rupert Stanley College (later Belfast Metropolitan College) and a total of 29 staff obtained social care qualifications. A staff team which was largely unqualified in the 1970s was converted into a mainly qualified team by the early 1990s, which was commendable.<sup>205</sup>
- (d) Although there were two nuns providing health care, the staff was predominantly male until the mid-1970s when women began to be appointed. This was in accordance with standard practice at that time, as it was felt that staff teams in residential child care should include both men and women, both as role models and to provide complementary types of care.

173 One remarkable feature of the staff at St Patrick’s – both brothers and lay staff – was the length of time that they remained in post. BR 26 commenced work at the Milltown site on 1 September 1951 and worked there for six years before the school moved to Glen Road, where he remained until 1995, a total of 44 years’ work at St Patrick’s. BR 94 was in post from 1961 to 1997, amounting to 36 years and BR 50 was there from 1977 to 1996, or 19 years. The longest serving member of lay staff was SPT 2 who worked at St Patrick’s for 30 years from 1966 to 1996. SPT 53 was probably in post for 28 years from 1966 to 1994. SPT 3 was there for 26 years from 1973 to 1999. SPT 52 (worked at St Patrick’s for 29 years from 1967 to 1996.<sup>206</sup> SPT 40 was there for 22 years from 1975 to 1997. SPT 26 joined the staff in 1972 and 43 years later he is

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203 SPT 12826-7

204 Day 144, p.61.

205 Day 145, p.110.

206 SPT 2902.

still working on the site as the Principal of Glenmona. These eight staff, who all gave evidence, contributed over 270 years’ service between them.

- 174 Clearly, as the numbers of staff increased in later years, there were many who must have served for shorter periods, but this core of long-serving staff will have provided valuable continuity, stability and consistency of practice. Consistent teamwork is a key feature of good residential care practice, and if staff work together over a long period they get to know each others’ ways of working. The fact that they remained together suggests that they were at least content to continue in post at St Patrick’s and at best that there was good teamwork. With consistent standards, boys would have been secure in knowing where they stood and what was expected of them, and staff would have known that they were being supported by their colleagues. BR 26 stated that the reason why they stayed was that they were totally committed to the work and some said that their time working at the school had been the happiest years of their working lives.<sup>207</sup> BR 26 himself said that he would choose to work there all over again.<sup>208</sup>
- 175 SPT 2 joined the staff part-time in 1966 to assist with activities. He became a full-time worker in 1970, undertook the Certificate in the Residential Care of Children and Young People in 1972-3 and retired in 1996 after 26 years’ service. When he started, there was only one member of staff on duty at any one time in the senior school and one in the junior school, each supervising four dormitories with up to 80 boys in all.<sup>209</sup>
- 176 Staffing levels were progressively improved. When investigating the death of SPT 81 in 1994, the Inspectors considered the levels of staffing at St Patrick’s. They found a ratio of 1:2 in Slemish House, 1:3.5 in Aisling and 1:4 in the other units. The Northern Ireland Office grant to St Patrick’s had allowed for 7.5 staff in Aisling House but only 6 were appointed, and they recommended that Aisling House should be:
- “at least staffed to the levels allowed for in the funding provided by the Northern Ireland Office.”<sup>210</sup>
- 177 However, the Inspectors also considered the additional demands made on staff by the nature of the work in Aisling House; they concluded that more than eleven staff were needed, and recommended that the funding supplied by the NIO should be reviewed.<sup>211</sup> The Inspectors went on to

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207 Day 157, p.45.

208 Day 157, p.118.

209 Day 143, p.30.

210 SPT 12643.

211 SPT 12644.

consider the staffing of other units, the availability of the Team Managers and the need to have a senior member of staff on site at all times.<sup>212</sup> It is clear from the Inspectors’ conclusions that if requests had been made for additional staff, the Order would have been pushing on an open door. In practice they had not even filled all the posts on the establishment for which they were receiving funding, and staff were stretched, to judge by the overtime worked and the allocation of staff from other units to fill gaps. Indeed, staffing was particularly thin at the time of the absconding, as explained in the SSI review, and eight of the SSI’s 23 recommendations for action related to staffing.<sup>213</sup> As the absconders were unsupervised at the time of their departure, it could be argued that the shortage of staff on duty may have contributed to the failure to prevent the absconding in which SPT 81 was killed.<sup>214</sup>

**178 The failure to appoint sufficient staff amounts to poor management, and we consider it to be a systemic failure.**

179 Brother Stephen joined St Patrick’s on 1 October 1940 as a Prefect (the Order’s term for a residential child care worker) and was Brother Director from 1942 up to his death on 22 December 1969. From 1942 to 1960 he was also the school Principal. His contribution was outstanding: he oversaw the redevelopment of the school on the Glen Road site and was the leading influence in the development of Rubane. He not only oversaw the management of the school for 27 years, but he also demonstrated a capacity for working with church leaders, civil servants and politicians, and he played a role in the planning of child care services throughout the province as a member of the Child Welfare Council. He was invested with the OBE on 3 March 1966.<sup>215</sup>

180 The lay staff mostly commuted to St Patrick’s from various parts of Belfast, though some staff housing was provided on Glen Road and attached to the chalets. The brothers, however, lived on site in a community house. There they were accountable to a brother who acted as Community Director who oversaw their devotional life, managed the community’s budget and supervised them as brothers.<sup>216</sup>

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212 SPT 12644-12646.

213 SPT 12834.

214 SPT 12812.

215 SPT 232-258.

216 Day 157, p.111.

- 181 For much of its existence, St Patrick’s had a full-time Chaplain, but in later years this post became part-time.<sup>217</sup>

## Inspections

- 182 It appears that inspections were carried out annually by the Ministry of Home Affairs while St Patrick’s was an industrial school and reformatory, though there are no surviving records of inspections prior to 1950. When it was redesignated a training school, following the 1950 Act, inspections were still undertaken by the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- 183 An inspection report by Miss Kathleen Forrest and Dr Simpson on 29 November 1950 made reference to earlier inspections. There was mention of the introduction of standardised medical records and the trialling of the bell and pad system for treating enuresis. There was also reference to trade training. Overall, the inspection approved of St Patrick’s work and it was described as “an excellent institution with a cheerful homely atmosphere.”<sup>218</sup>
- 184 A further approving report recorded an inspection on 18 November 1951.<sup>219</sup> Throughout the 1950s there are references in the home’s diary to annual visits of inspection, and these entries are countersigned by the inspectors, but no reports have survived. Most of the visits were conducted in one day by two people, but in 1960 the inspection took a week and in 1971 it took two days.<sup>220</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s the log indicates that a number of distinguished visitors called on St Patrick’s, including successive Lord Mayors of Belfast, Lord Wakehurst, Rt Hon Brian Faulkner, Lord Erskine, the Attorney General, the Lord Chief Justice, the Permanent Secretary of MOHA and a number of MPs.<sup>221 222</sup>
- 185 There is a reference in the St Patrick’s diary to an inspection on 15 June 1971, but none thereafter until 1988. There is also a major gap in the inspection records. This may in part be due to the systematic destruction

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217 Day 157, p.111.

218 SPT 10384 –10386.

219 SPT 10393-10394.

220 SPT 10466, 10496.

221 Inspection visits: 28 January 1953, Miss Miller (SPT 10446); 26 October 1954, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest (SPT 10452); 29 November 1955, Dr Simpson and Miss Knight (SPT 10455); 30 November 1956, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest (SPT 10456); 3 December 1957, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest (SPT 10460); 9 December 1958, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest (SPT 10462); 8-15 December 1960, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest (SPT 10466); 11 December 1962, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest (SPT 10470); 8 March 1966, Miss Forrest, Mr Blackburn and Mr Westhead (SPT 10482); 22 August 1967, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest (SPT 10488); 15-16 June 1971 (SPT 10496).

222 SPT 10446-10496.

of records, as no reports are available between 1951 and 1988, but it may also reflect a reduction in the number of inspections and the style of inspecting. The Social Work Advisory Group was made responsible for inspections from 1972 onwards, and, as for children’s homes, their visits were not regular and tended to be supportive, advisory and informal, rather than inspectorial. We noted Mr Donnell’s evidence that he visited the training schools about once a month, and sometimes more frequently, and was used by the principals as a sounding board to discuss practice and procedures.<sup>223</sup> We accept that this contact provided some degree of external scrutiny to the school.

186 We have noted in other modules the failure of the Social Work Advisory Group to conduct regular formal inspections from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, when they were increased in response to the Kincora scandal prior to the publication of the Hughes Report. **St Patrick’s was not inspected between 1971 and 1988, and we consider the lack of formal inspections a systemic failing.**

187 However, following the publication of the Hughes Report in December 1985 it was decided to inspect all residential child care facilities. Between May 1987 and April 1988 all four training schools were inspected. The inspection of St Patrick’s took place in February 1988.<sup>224</sup> There were at that time 91 boys on roll, but only 61 in residence; there were 73 staff, including 35 care staff, 7 night care staff and 16 teachers.<sup>225</sup> The school was therefore sufficiently staffed for boys to receive individual attention; indeed, there were very few allegations relating to St Patrick’s last decade as a training school. The main report was 69 pages long and contained 52 recommendations, though there were no suggestions as to which should be treated as priorities. The overall conclusion was that the quality of care at St Patrick’s was good.

188 In October 1989 the reports on the training schools were issued as a compendium.<sup>226</sup> There was, however, a sequel to this inspection, described in the next paragraph. At this time it was the policy that major inspections should take place every four years, with annual ‘regulatory’ inspections carried out by individual inspectors to check on progress in the implementation of recommendations made in the main inspections. In these inspections Inspectors toured the school and then spent time with the Principal.<sup>227</sup>

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223 SPT 3005.

224 SPT 18358-18342.

225 SPT 18364.

226 SPT 16222-16304 and appendices SPT 16305-16310.

227 Day 157, p.64.

- 189 Relations between the School and the Inspectorate were for the most part cordial, but there was one such follow-up inspection on 24 January 1990 which caused considerable tension. On 12 March 1990 A.D. Shannon, newly arrived in the Northern Ireland Office to take over the division which included responsibility for the training schools, wrote a terse letter to the Bishop as Chairman of the Management Committee, expressing concern at the school’s failure to implement the recommendations of the 1988 report, citing poor morale, low standards of care and poor physical standards. He said that he would have to advise the social services boards not to send children to St Patrick’s if emergency action were not taken.<sup>228</sup>
- 190 This letter caused considerable alarm, as it was the first time that an inspection had led to such severe criticism, and there had been no forewarning that there was such concern. At meetings of the Board of Management on 23 March and 27 April 1990 concern was expressed at the change of language between the Inspectorate’s reports and Mr Shannon’s letter. Mr W.P.M. O’Driscoll, a Solicitor and Board member, responded in detail, essentially stating that action was being taken on all twenty of the recommendations within the control of the school, but that other issues, such as the physical condition of the buildings, were dependent upon capital funding from the government.<sup>229</sup> Eventually £1.9 million was provided to update the units. No allegations of abuse have been made concerning this period, but the contretemps was significant in that St Patrick’s had till then always maintained good relations with the government and had come out of inspections well.
- 191 In December 1993 there was a further regulatory inspection. At that time there were 98 boys on the roll but only 43 were present. Fourteen of the boys present under Training School Orders were there because of truancy. There were 61 staff on the establishment. New units were being built. The Inspector’s report contained only two recommendations.<sup>230</sup>
- 192 Finally, there were unannounced inspections, designed to check that the standards established in the formal inspections were being maintained at other times, and for this purpose Inspectors called at weekends and in evenings. Indeed, BR 26 described one Inspector as part of the furniture, as he visited frequently.<sup>231</sup> The visits of Inspectors were welcomed for the most part, as their advice was “invariably helpful”.<sup>232</sup>

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228 SPT 10420-10423.

229 SPT 10424-10435.

230 SPT 10410-SPT 10418.

231 Day 157, p.65.

232 Day 157, p.64.

## Allegations of Abuse

### Overview

193 A total of 27 witnesses made allegations of sexual or physical abuse against 26 brothers, 1 priest and 11 lay staff, or 38 adults in total. The periods to which these allegations relate were:

Year	Number of Applicants	Boys on Roll
1950s	1	150-200
1960s	6	200-250
1970s	12	160-190
1980s	6	60-95
1990s	2	43

194 Of these 27, eleven made allegations of both physical and sexual abuse, eleven alleged sexual abuse only and five alleged physical abuse only. One allegation specifying emotional abuse was made. There were no substantial allegations of neglect. It will be noted that the peak of the allegations was in the 1970s, and that the numbers fell away thereafter. The majority of the allegations were made against the De La Salle brothers, rather than the lay staff. There were two or three years when a high number of allegations were made, but there were other periods when no allegations were made for some years. In particular, there were very few allegations made concerning the last decade of St Patrick’s role as a training school; the occupancy of the school also reduced at this time.

195 There were two brothers and one lay member of staff who were the subject of eight or more allegations, and they accounted for about a third of the allegations. By contrast, 29 of the 38 adults were subject to three or fewer allegations, and there were many more staff who were not subject to any allegations.

196 The number of allegations relating to St Patrick’s period as a training school has to be set in the context of a 45-year period when for much of the time there were up to 160 boys in the school and some thousands of boys will have passed through St Patrick’s. It should be noted that while the De La Salle Order offered a general apology to all victims of abuse in St Patrick’s, with minor exceptions individual witnesses accused of abuse and the Order collectively denied every allegation of abuse other than those perpetrated by DL 137.



197 In this section of the chapter, allegations of sexual abuse are considered first and are listed by the decade in which it was said to have taken place, except that the two brothers and one member of lay staff who were subject to the most allegations are then considered in turn. Peer sexual abuse is then considered. Allegations of physical abuse are divided into those concerning staff and those relating to peers. Finally, allegations concerning other types of abuse and unacceptable practices (other than punishments, which have been described above) are addressed.

### **Allegations of Sexual Abuse: 1940s**

198 In 2004 SPT 101 alleged through a solicitor that in late 1943 and early 1944 he had been seriously sexually and physically abused by BR 97 while based at Forkill, when St Patrick’s leased additional premises there between 1941 and 1944. He believed that at least two other residents had been abused by the same brother, and the matter was investigated at the time by BR 39.<sup>233</sup> BR 97 was transferred to another school in 1945, and left the Order in 1947.<sup>234</sup> SPT 101 was also seriously upset by absconders having their heads shaved and by the death of a boy who fell off a tractor on his way to work in the potato fields.<sup>235</sup>

199 At the request of the Minister of Home Affairs, Rt. Hon. Edmond Warnock KC, on 9 April 1948 there was an inquiry presided over by the Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr Mageean, into abuse in 1946 and 1948.<sup>236</sup> BR 39, then the Superior, described some of the boys as “sex maniacs” and dismissed their allegations of sexual abuse by brothers, including BR 69, who was accused by three boys. They had said to him that they had been put up to make the allegations by an older boy who, on being questioned, said that he found BR 69 too strict and wanted him moved. Allegations had also been made against BR 86, BR 83 and BR 70. SPT 32 also made allegations against BR 70, but again BR 39 dismissed his evidence as that of a sex maniac. It was also alleged that SPT 33, a lay woodwork teacher, had painted five boys’ privates, but BR 39 had not wanted “to go into it with this man” and so dismissed him.<sup>237</sup> Bishop Mageean wrote to the Minister of Home Affairs on 29 April 1948 to say that there was no foundation to the allegations against the brothers, but

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233 SPT 30101-30103, 30119-30120.

234 SPT 30104.

235 SPT 30121.

236 SPT 10578-10579.

237 SPT 10551-10554.

that SPT 33 had been dismissed.<sup>238</sup> In oral evidence to the Inquiry, HIA 272 reported that SPT 43 said that he had had sex with BR 86. He taught at St Patrick’s for 49 years up to 1992.<sup>239</sup>

### **Allegations of Sexual Abuse: 1950s**

200 SPT 131 alleged indecent assault by BR 43 during the 1950s. At this time St Patrick’s was sited at Milltown. No other allegations of sexual abuse were made against BR 43, but there was one allegation of physical abuse. The police investigated SPT 131’s allegation in 1993 and again in 2005 but decided to take no action.<sup>240</sup> SPT 131 did not come forward as an applicant. We conclude that sexual abuse was not a systemic problem during the 1950s.

### **Allegations of Sexual Abuse: 1960s**

201 The School moved to Glen Road in 1957, and further allegations relate to the period soon afterwards. HIA 314 stated that he was admitted to Milltown, but was one of the boys moved to Glen Road when it opened, though the records suggest that he was in fact only admitted on 10 June 1959, and would never have been at Milltown. He made a number of allegations of both sexual and physical abuse, and named four brothers who he said abused him – BR 1, BR 39, BR 42 and BR 47.<sup>241</sup> These brothers are all deceased except for BR 42, who denied all of HIA 314’s allegations.

202 HIA 314 stated that brothers checked them under their arms and between their legs in the showers and, as noted above, helped the “younger” boys into their pyjamas. There were very few boys who were not teenagers, and there were no very young children who might have required such help. BR 42 and BR 47 put their hands under his sheets and fondled him, and he was:

“often woken in the middle of the night to perform sexual acts on the Brother who was on duty that night”.<sup>242</sup>

BR 39 took a “special interest” in him, and took him out to restaurants and hotels for meals.

“Looking back now, it is obvious they were grooming us and that [BR 39’s] touching was not accidental but sexual in nature”.

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238 SPT 10578-10579.

239 Day 139, p.85.

240 SPT 26829-26830.

241 SPT 003-004.

242 SPT 003.

He caressed HIA 314’s penis, legs and bottom and forced him to engage in mutual masturbation. The boys wore shorts and brothers put their hands up the boys’ legs to fondle them. At the holiday home in Cushendall, there was woodland, and:

“... you would often see [BR 47 and BR 26] disappearing with the boys but nothing was ever said about it”.<sup>243</sup>

203 HIA 100 said that BR 94 used to pull him against his penis, but he did not see this as sexual abuse.<sup>244</sup> He said the brothers abused him at the swimming pool, in the store and in the brothers’ house, where he was taken by a brother, as it was out of bounds to boys.<sup>245</sup>

204 HIA 314 described a pattern of sexual abuse also reported by witnesses who were resident in Rubane, which was also run by the De La Salle Brothers:

“[BR 47 and BR 42] sexually abused me regularly. They would make me sit next to them in the back row of the television room and fondle me. They would open their cassocks and make me masturbate them and then they would masturbate me. [BR 1] was doing this too. There would be a number of Brothers sitting in the back row with a number of boys beside them. I saw other boys being abused in the television room. [BR 48] used to sit at the back watching television with younger boys. He always had their hands in the pocket of his cassock. He had a certain group he always chose. Nobody was allowed to sit in the back row unless the Brothers said they could. They all had their favourites.”<sup>246</sup>

205 A significant feature of this allegation is that, if it is true that a number of brothers were involved, it is hard to imagine that they were not well aware of each others’ misconduct. If so, this suggests that there was a general culture among some brothers that sexual abuse of boys was acceptable, and it is reasonable to suppose that they could have felt that this gave them licence for more serious sexual offending in private.

206 SPT 40 was a member of the care staff throughout the 1960s, and in oral evidence he expressed concern that the brothers sat with their arms round boys in the TV room. He felt it was wrong and it made him feel “very, very uncomfortable”, and he would “glare” at the brothers, but while the

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243 SPT 004.

244 Day 138, p.141.

245 Day 138, p.142.

246 SPT 004.

lay staff were aware of this practice, they felt unable to do anything about it.<sup>247</sup>

- 207 HIA 314 also alleged that brothers were involved in abusing boys in the changing room for the swimming pool, involving mutual masturbation, and in the dormitories and the brothers’ cells. He said he never let it get as far as intercourse, but he knew other boys who did.<sup>248</sup> BR 42 denied the possibility of abuse in the dormitories, as there was a night supervisor.<sup>249</sup>
- 208 HIA 272 said that he distinctly remembered brothers holding the hands of younger boys and letting them have treats and cigarettes.<sup>250</sup> The Order denied any collective memory of brothers holding boys’ hands, though they would have comforted children who were upset. They sometimes bought sweets or cigarettes for boys as acts of kindness.<sup>251</sup> <sup>252</sup> In view of the age at which boys were typically admitted, ‘younger boys’ would presumably have been twelve-year-olds.
- 209 HIA 262 was only in St Patrick’s briefly in 1964, before being moved to Rubane. He alleges that he was abused in the classroom by BR 24, who first made as if to comfort him, but then put his hand down HIA 262’s trousers and fondled him, before making HIA 262 fondle him in turn. HIA 262 told us that when he tried to escape, he was apprehended, beaten, slapped across the face, put in a windowless store room for some time by BR 24, and then told to tell no one.<sup>253</sup>
- 210 Five other former boys at St Patrick’s approached the police with allegations against BR 24, although none of them applied to give evidence to the Inquiry. Their allegations included stroking, reciprocal fondling, masturbation and rape. BR 24 died in 1976 and was therefore unable to respond to these allegations.<sup>254</sup> The Order has pointed out that the police “dismissed as fabrication the allegations of two of the complainants”.
- 211 HIA 100 alleged that BR 47 sexually abused him in the brother’s room off the dormitory, making him perform oral sex or masturbation, or having penetrative sex.

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247 Day 145, p.11.

248 SPT 005.

249 SPT 25510.

250 SPT 082.

251 SPT 323-324.

252 Day 139, p.86.

253 SPT 028.

254 SPT 20808, 22545, 22554, 20837-20843, 25378-25379

“These incidents happened regularly, monthly or sometimes more frequently”.<sup>255</sup>

### **Allegations of Sexual Abuse: 1970s**

212 HIA 58 said that on two occasions when he was placed in a sick room on the second floor, where there was no light except from a frosted window and the furnishings consisted of a mattress and an army blanket, he was physically and sexually assaulted. On each occasion two brothers held him down, as he was kicking out, and a third raped him anally; on the first time the abuser was alleged to be BR 1 and on the second possibly BR 94. HIA 58 said that this lasted about ten minutes, and that the brothers then left him:

“You would get a glass of milk and a jam sandwich next morning”.<sup>256</sup>

213 HIA 272 alleges that he had been sexually abused by BR 5 at primary school before admission to St Patrick’s.<sup>257</sup> HIA 272 was admitted to St Patrick’s about 1970, by which time BR 5 had been appointed head of the school, and HIA 272 alleges that, on the pretext of counting the money in the charity boxes or to punish him, BR 5 used to take him into his office, lock the mahogany door, close the blinds and sexually abuse him. HIA 272 described the way that sweat poured down BR 5’s face when he had abused him; the abuse was said to be fairly regular over a period of about a year.<sup>258</sup> HIA 272 said that when he objected, BR 5 threatened to send him to a home where he would be raped.<sup>259</sup>

214 HIA 272 noted that the “country boys” did not get visitors or home visits (as the buses had been hijacked and burnt out during the Troubles), and the brothers befriended them, giving them treats and cigarettes, walking around holding their hands, and receiving sexual favours in return.<sup>260</sup> Furthermore, HIA 26 said that he kept seeing brothers from Rubane, where he had been sexually abused, and he was afraid of them.<sup>261</sup>

215 HIA 162 was admitted to St Patrick’s in 1973. He made minor allegations of sexual abuse concerning the staff:

“[The] woodwork teacher used to push up behind us as we bent over the lathe, and then laugh it off”.<sup>262</sup>

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255 SPT 049-050.

256 SPT 058-059.

257 SPT 078.

258 SPT 079.

259 SPT 080.

260 SPT 081-082

261 SPT 073.

262 SPT 107.

The brothers would also rub themselves against boys, he said, but he was not himself molested.

216 HIA 374 stayed at St Patrick’s briefly in the mid-1970s, and alleges that he was sexually abused once by BR 89 who was at first very nice to him, stroking his hair and face but then forced HIA 374 to masturbate him over his clothing, which left HIA 374 “totally shocked” as he had “never experienced anything like that before”.<sup>263</sup> This is the only allegation concerning BR 89.

217 HIA 227 said that BR 4:

“frequently felt my backside through my trousers and he did this no matter where you met him or whether people were there as well. I saw him do this on numerous occasions to other boys.”<sup>264</sup>

218 HIA 218 and his brother HIA 219 made serious allegations of sexual abuse by staff both at Rubane, where they had been prior to transfer to St Patrick’s, and at St Patrick’s itself. HIA 218 told us he woke to find another resident performing oral sex on him, he described a brother lying on his bed and masturbating, himself, and said he was touched in a sexual manner by the cook (presumably DL 137). Without providing substantiating evidence, he summarised:

“We were sexually abused as frequently as every other night at St Patrick’s. You had to perform oral and anal sex and masturbation on the Brothers”.<sup>265</sup>

219 HIA 219 gave accounts of systematic grooming and escalating abuse by two brothers, to the point that:

“...both brothers were coming in and bugging me on different nights”.<sup>266</sup>

He also alleged abuse by another brother who was responsible for clothing, and by a civilian worker when they were on the home’s annual holiday.<sup>267</sup>

The allegations of HIA 218 and HIA 219 are among the most serious made against staff at St Patrick’s, going well beyond the more typical complaints of fondling and masturbation. It should be noted that we have taken account of the credibility of witnesses and of the Order’s observations in

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263 SPT 120.

264 SPT 130.

265 SPT 136.

266 SPT 144-145.

267 SPT 146.

this respect, and in general we found the more extreme allegations less convincing.

- 220 HIA 96, who said that a woman touched him while hanging curtains. He told the head of Aisling House (SPT 13) who was disinclined to believe his allegation.<sup>268</sup> HIA 96 added that the same woman also touched other boys sexually, and he said that he saw another female member of staff in a boy’s bed under the duvet.<sup>269</sup> These incidents were presumably among the few allegations relating to the 1980s.
- 221 The allegations listed above cover four decades, a period in which over a thousand boys will have passed through St Patrick’s. The question facing the Inquiry is whether the allegations constitute systemic abuse, rather than a scatter of individual instances. In so far as some of the incidents described appear to be one-off and the only allegation against a specific brother or lay member of staff, it is not possible to describe all the alleged abuse as systemic.
- 222 We are satisfied that there was a pattern of sexual activity in the television room on the part of some brothers which amounted to systemic abuse. It was not only reported by witnesses, but a former member of staff expressed concern in his oral evidence about brothers’ behaviour in the TV room. It also replicated practice described at Rubane, which was also run by the De La Salle Brothers. Some brothers must have been aware of each others’ misconduct, and the evidence suggests that the sexual misconduct in the television room was only the most obvious symptom of a wider pattern of sexual abuse, particularly during the 1970s, some of which was relatively minor, but some of which was serious.
- 223 **We therefore consider the sexual abuse perpetrated by some Brothers, particularly as reported in the television room, to have been systemic.**

## BR 1

- 224 BR 1 was at St Patrick’s from 1958 to 1971, and from 1972 to 1977. At first he had the role of clerk, but in 1965 he became a housemaster. In 1977 he was moved to Rubane to act as Brother Director. At Rubane he was subject to a large number of allegations of sexual abuse, which appear to have consisted of stroking, rubbing and fondling, with no suggestion of any penetrative abuse. Bishop Philbin, as the Chairman of

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268 Day 142, p.149

269 Day 142, p.152

the Board responsible for Rubane, learnt of the allegations and suspended him in 1980. The police investigated the allegations and BR 1 was to be prosecuted but he escaped court action on grounds of serious ill-health, retiring to the south of Ireland, where he lived for a further twenty years, dying in 2000. These matters are dealt with more fully in the chapter on Rubane House.

225 At St Patrick’s BR 1 at first worked in the office as an administrator, and he was said to have had very little direct access to boys, other than the few specifically allocated to work in the office. Some witnesses said that they rarely saw him or that they saw him only during Mass. However, according to HIA 100, BR 1 was involved in boxing and did not confine himself to the office, being around the school a lot.<sup>270</sup> It was said, for example, that brothers passed through the junior school on the way from the offices to their house. His abuse of boys at St Patrick’s was said to have started in 1957 and continued to 1971, covering most of his time in the school, but the number of boys alleging abuse is fewer than at Rubane, perhaps because of the limits on his access to boys. Allegations by HIA 314 and HIA 58 have already been quoted.

226 HIA 100 made allegations against BR 1:

“[BR 1] was always touching you up and pulling you in towards him. He made me put my hand inside his long robe and masturbate him. This happened soon after I arrived at St Patrick’s and it happened on at least a monthly basis. It often took place in the store outside the dormitory or near the swimming pool area or at the brother’s house, as he would take you there on occasion”.<sup>271</sup>

This statement is unusual in its reference to the brothers’ house. Unless BR 1 chose times when all the other brothers were otherwise engaged, they would have been aware of this. HIA 100 alleged that the abuse took place three or four times a week, as BR 1 decided.

227 HIA 229 was at St Patrick’s about the same time as HIA 314. He states that he was sexually abused by a number of brothers, but mainly by BR 1.<sup>272</sup> He repeated HIA 314’s account of sexual abuse while watching television and in the cinema; BR 1 used to give him sweets then fondle him, though he tried to sit further away.

“At the time I did not realise it was wrong because I was young and

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270 Day 138, p.144.

271 SPT 049.

272 SPT 010.



impressionable although now I can see how wrong it was. At the time I was just having a hard time and felt very lonely”.<sup>273</sup>

228 HIA 229 went on to allege that he was bugged by BR 1 on three occasions in an area known as the pigeon holes where boys used to hang up their suits and where they could not be seen from the dormitory. He also mentioned other times when BR 1 forced him to perform oral sex and masturbate him, when he sexually assaulted HIA 229 in the clothing store and when he was ill in bed, alone in the dormitory.<sup>274</sup> HIA 229 also alleged that when taken by car to help locate absconders, BR 46 drove and HIA 229 was in the back with BR 1 who made him masturbate him. Again, at Kilmore House in Glenariff, when preparing the house for the school’s holidays, BR 1 bugged him, and a visiting brother from Dublin forced him to perform oral sex. HIA 229 believes he was targeted, selected to do the work at the holiday home so that he could be abused.<sup>275</sup> This pattern of abuse is different from that reported in Rubane and by other witnesses at St Patrick’s, in that HIA 229 is the only witness to allege penetrative abuse by BR 1. The Order noted that three witnesses who alleged abuse by BR 1 were not at Rubane with him (though one was at St Patrick’s at the same time as BR 1), and that during the 1993-4 police enquiries no complaints were made against BR 1 about his time at St Patrick’s, but that the majority emerged after allegations had been made against him about his time in Rubane.

229 **Although the Order has stated that they do not see the allegations as well founded, it is our view that BR 1 sexually abused boys while he was at St Patrick’s and that this constituted systemic abuse; if he had been apprehended and had not been promoted to be Brother Director of Rubane House, the boys whom he abused there would not have been abused by him.**

## BR 26

230 Br 26 had a remarkable career at St Patrick’s, having joined the staff at the age of 21 on 1 September 1951 when the school was based at the Milltown site and left in 1995 when he was appointed Brother Provincial of the De La Salle Order for the whole of Ireland. During the course of his career he was first a Housemaster, and later Head of the Senior School,

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273 SPT 011.

274 SPT 011.

275 SPT 012.

Director of the Community and finally Principal, holding all these roles for several years. He therefore made a major contribution to the management and development of St Patrick’s, and the insights he offered in his oral evidence to the Inquiry and his impressive recall of events despite having attained the age of 85 indicated some of his qualities as a professional. SPT 26, who worked at St Patrick’s for many years and was Director of Glenmona Resource Centre, considered BR 26 “a very decent, caring considerate person”.<sup>276</sup>

- 231 It is hard to square his evidence and BR 26’s distinguished career record, therefore, with the fact that sixteen former residents at St Patrick’s made allegations of physical and/or sexual abuse against him. Of these, six gave evidence to the Inquiry, whereas others had spoken to the police. These allegations related to events spread over many years from May 1963 to August 1995, and there is no obvious reason why BR 26 should have been selected as a target for allegations if they were false. All the allegations were denied by BR 26, who provided denials or rebuttals in each case.<sup>277</sup>
- 232 SPT 145 said that BR 26 was well liked and “hard but fair”. He knew BR 26 from 1963 to 1965 and alleged that when he was first admitted to the school BR 26 punched him in the stomach, just to let him know who was boss and that he was not taking any nonsense.<sup>278</sup>
- 233 HIA 17 alleged that in the late 1960s he observed BR 26 having sex with a boy and that, when he told other boys, BR 26 maltreated him, attempting sexual abuse. He added that he told BR 83 who confronted BR 26.<sup>279</sup> BR 26 said that HIA 17 was in the junior school, whereas BR 26 was in the senior school and was not involved in the activities where the alleged abuse took place. HIA 58 alleged that BR 26 threw him in the swimming pool for absconding, beat him and hit him with a bunch of keys.<sup>280</sup> BR 26 said that he had a master key, not a bunch, and that HIA 58 was in the junior school.<sup>281</sup>
- 234 HIA 26 was admitted to St Patrick’s in 1970. He states that when he was in a punishment cell BR 26 “felt all around me and tried to sexually assault

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276 Day 145, p.87.

277 SPT 2191-2196.

278 SPT 21123.

279 SPT 25466.

280 SPT 057-058.

281 SPT 2193.

me there and I kicked the legs off him”.<sup>282</sup> He was fifteen and a half by this time. HIA 137 described being punished by BR 26, whom he described as “the enforcer”, belting him on a number of occasions, in order to break him, once after insisting on a prolonged cold shower first.<sup>283</sup> HIA 374 alleged sexual abuse, but it is unclear whether his description referred to BR 26.<sup>284</sup>

- 235 HIA 54 was in St Patrick’s on two occasions but made an unusual allegation of sexual abuse, stating that he was under the influence of tranquillisers on his first admission in 1978, and that he was held down by two brothers while BR 26 raped him.<sup>285</sup> SPT 130 alleged repeated sexual abuse by three brothers in consort, including BR 26, in the dormitory under the pretence of delivering comics.<sup>286</sup> BR 26 said this was a total fabrication.<sup>287</sup> HIA 51 also alleged sexual abuse by BR 26 while delivering comics to his bedroom late at night.<sup>288</sup> While denying the allegation of abuse, BR 26 acknowledged that he delivered comics to boys twice a week to help them settle down.<sup>289</sup>
- 236 SPT 154 alleged that BR 26 took him out in his car and made advances. BR 26 said he did not recall him<sup>290</sup> but that he would not have taken this boy out because of his unreliability, though he did on occasions take boys out.<sup>291</sup> SPT 136 alleged that during the mid-1980s BR 26 abused him sexually while providing comics, involving oral sex.<sup>292</sup> SPT 136 was later convicted of perjury, having made a false allegation which resulted in a man being convicted.<sup>293</sup>
- 237 HIA 253 said that BR 26 groomed him by putting his arm round him, touching him non-sexually and suggesting that he might be able to make things easier for HIA 253, perhaps shortening the length of his stay at St Patrick’s. Then BR 26 touched him, took him to a room, and tried to persuade HIA 253 to masturbate him, exposing himself on three or four occasions. HIA 253 resisted and from then onwards he attempted to abscond at every opportunity, which led to his transfer to Lisnevin.<sup>294</sup>

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282 SPT 074.

283 SPT 25376-25377.

284 SPT 2196.

285 SPT 151.

286 SPT 26824-26825.

287 SPT 2196.

288 SPT 166.

289 SPT 2192.

290 SPT 2195.

291 SPT 22944.

292 SPT 2194.

293 SPT 20597.

294 SPT 173-174.

- 238 SPT 119 alleged that in the late 1980s BR 26 and two other brothers anally raped him while they were under the influence of drink when he was on his own in his unit, having been kept back while his unit was on holiday.<sup>295</sup> BR 26 said that he was a life-long teetotaler and that one boy would not be left on his own in a chalet.<sup>296</sup> HIA 384 alleged that SPT 54 was BR 26’s “golden boy” and that BR 26 had paid SPT 54 to abuse him sexually while placed in Slemish House. BR 26 considered this allegation “totally ridiculous”.<sup>297</sup>
- 239 The allegations made by SPT 96 led to a major inquiry. BR 26 described him as “troublesome”, which led to him being transferred from the junior to the senior school.<sup>298</sup> Following the publication of an article in the *News of the World* on 22 August 1993 quoting allegations by SPT 134, SPT 96 wrote to the Chief Constable and made allegations of sexual abuse, naming BR 26 and three other brothers.<sup>299</sup> SPT 96 quoted other boys as witnesses and the police made thorough enquiries, attempting to contact all 318 boys who had been at St Patrick’s during that period. Of the 155 with whom they made contact, only six made allegations, three of which concerned DL 137. When questioned by the police there was virtually no corroboration of SPT 96’s allegations.<sup>300</sup> No action was taken.<sup>301</sup> HIA 51 persisted with his allegations, and was finally given detailed reasons by the Director of Public Prosecutions as to why they had not prosecuted BR 26.<sup>302</sup>
- 240 On deciding to investigate, the police informed the Northern Ireland Office of their enquiries. The NIO informed the Inspectorate, and they decided to tell the Bishop, with a view to the suspension of BR 26, who was at this time the Principal of the school. The NIO and the Inspectorate met Bishop Farquhar and Father McCann, the Chair and Secretary of the Board of Management, who then considered the situation.<sup>303</sup> They said that they consulted BR 26, who had denied the truth of the allegations. They believed BR 26, who was held in high regard, as both men had been

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295 SPT 2195.

296 SPT 26005-26006.

297 SPT 2194.

298 SPT 2195.

299 SPT 20603.

300 SPT 20868-20869, 20608-20615.

301 SPT 20577.

302 Day 146, pp.33 to 37.

303 SPT 12924-12941.

Chaplains at St Patrick’s,<sup>304</sup> and the Bishop decided not to suspend him, as this would have had a major (and in his view unwarranted) impact on BR 26’s career and the running of the school. In the light of the Bishop’s decision, the NIO decided to adopt a watching brief.<sup>305</sup> BR 26 said in oral evidence that the allegations had not been put to him by the Bishop, and he learnt of the concerns when contacted by the police.<sup>306</sup>

241 The allegations related to 1960, and were therefore 35 years old, and the police concluded that there were insufficient grounds for them to take action. BR 26 co-operated voluntarily with their inquiries as he wished to ensure that his name was cleared. The Diocese concluded that their action had been correct in deciding not to suspend BR 26. The matter was not mentioned in the minutes of the following Board of Management meeting. It should be noted that neither the NIO nor the Inspectorate had the power to suspend BR 26, though they could have exerted pressure on the Board of Management, at the risk of upsetting the Catholic Church.

242 **It is our view that, taking account of current practice in the mid-1990s, Bishop Farquhar was at fault in failing to suspend BR 26 during the police enquiries and in undertaking their own limited investigation, and that these failures were systemic, potentially putting the boys then and subsequently at St Patrick’s at risk.**

243 The police felt that the evidence against BR 26 was insufficient to take action. In all they interviewed him seven times, and on every occasion concluded that the evidence would not support action. The conclusions reached by the police have to be interpreted in the context of developments at that time. There was still mistrust of the police in some sections of the population, which could have dissuaded some former residents from disclosing abuse. The police were, of course, seeking reliable evidence for prosecutions where the verdict would be beyond reasonable doubt. Furthermore, less credence was placed then in the evidence of the victims of alleged abuse, particularly in view of their histories as offenders.

244 We heard evidence from witnesses who spoke highly of BR 26 and who found the allegations of abuse unbelievable. SPT 125, for example, said that he found the allegations of abuse against BR 26 incredible. BR 26 could have groomed him, he said in oral evidence, as they spent time together walking round the campus and talking, but he never sensed

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304 Day 157, p.58.

305 Day 149, p.60.

306 Day 157, p.55 to 56.

anything but concern on BR 26’s part, and the description of BR 26 as an abuser was “not the man I knew”.<sup>307</sup>

- 245 There can be no doubt that BR 26 devoted his life to St Patrick’s, and made a major professional contribution to it and the boys who were in its care over more than four decades. Those who worked with him and gave evidence to the Inquiry hold him in the highest regard, and do not believe that he could have behaved in the manner alleged.
- 246 It has to be acknowledged, however, that the history of residential child care contains many examples of eminent people who have had excellent reputations as qualified professionals, who have helped many children in their care, and who have often been intelligent, cultured, charming and even charismatic, but who have nonetheless abused some of the children for whom they were responsible.
- 247 A significant number of former residents of St Patrick’s have made allegations of sexual and physical abuse by BR 26 over many years, although when we examined their accounts in detail we considered that many of the allegations were not persuasive for various reasons. Some of the allegations suggest that the abuser may have been misidentified, and some allegations do not meet the necessary standard of proof on the balance of probability. Having considered all of the evidence we are not persuaded to the necessary standard of proof that BR 26 sexually abused boys in his care, although his practice of delivering comics to boys at night left him open to allegations of grooming. However, we are satisfied to the necessary standard that BR 26 did beat boys on occasion, and used physical force to maintain control, in accordance with St Patrick’s traditional training school way of working.

#### **DL 137**

- 248 DL 137 was born on 10 May 1955; between the ages of 13 and 15 he lived at Rubane and he alleged that while he was there he was sexually abused. He was taken on as an Assistant Chef at St Patrick’s on 22 February 1975 when he was nearly twenty years old, presumably as an example of the brothers fulfilling their responsibility to find jobs for boys leaving their homes.
- 249 It was in 1978, when he had been working at St Patrick’s for more than three years, that two boys reported that DL 137 had offered them money in return for sexual favours. On 9 July 1978 he was questioned by the

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307 Day 140, p.103.

Brother Director, then BR 95, who gave him a “severe warning” and forbade him to mix with the boys.<sup>308</sup> There is no reference to this episode in the Board of Management minutes, which suggests that BR 95 decided not to report the matter. No further problem was identified prior to the events that led to DL 137’s departure from St Patrick’s.

- 250 Two years later further complaints were made that DL 137 had sexually abused boys. SPT 53 found SPT 140 crying, as DL 137 had offered him cigarettes to put his hand down his underpants. This was the first time that SPT 53 had encountered this problem and he informed BR 95, who called DL 137 in. On 12 March 1980 BR 95 suspended DL 137 and considered the options open to him. The outcome was that DL 137 signed a letter of resignation and left St Patrick’s.<sup>309</sup> SPT 53 witnessed DL 137’s resignation, but he was not sure whether DL 137 had committed an offence.<sup>310</sup> BR 26 also witnessed the resignation, and recalled in evidence that this was the first he had heard of DL 137’s misconduct, other than rumours.<sup>311</sup> SPT 40 said that he had heard no more than gossip and rumours within the school community, but he made sure that DL 137 had no contact with the boys in his chalet.<sup>312</sup>
- 251 BR 95 decided that no further action was required, and therefore did not report the allegations to the police or to the Brother Provincial.<sup>313</sup> Again, there is no reference to the matter in the minutes of the following Board of Management meeting, other than that DL 137 had resigned.<sup>314</sup> It is possible that the Brother Director informed the Board confidentially and that they decided that discretion was necessary for the good name of the school, but there is no mention in subsequent documentation that this was the case; it seems more likely that BR 95 felt that ‘least said, soonest mended’ and kept the matter to himself.
- 252 Six months later BR 95 gave DL 137 a positive job reference, making no mention of the reason for his resignation from St Patrick’s and describing him as diligent, conscientious and punctual.<sup>315</sup> DL 137 went on to commit further sexual abuse, and eight years after he left St Patrick’s, on 27 September 1988, he was convicted of sex offences and sentenced to four

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308 SPT 21365, 21382.

309 SPT 21369.

310 Day 145, pp.44 to 46.

311 Day 157, p.46.

312 Day 145, p.12.

313 Day 149, p.20.

314 SPT 80999.

315 SPT 21368.

years in prison. Men who had been resident as boys at St Patrick’s during DL 137’s employment then came forward to make allegations of abuse. He was prosecuted for offences committed between 1977 and 1980, and he pleaded guilty to gross indecency but not buggery. He was convicted on 4 December 1995 fifteen years after he had left St Patrick’s.

253 DL 137 died on 24 December 2004. There were further complaints about his abuse of boys after his death, and three civil cases for damages.<sup>316</sup> Consideration was given to the prosecution of BR 95 for concealing DL 137’s offences, but it was concluded that the case could not be proved and so the Director of Public Prosecutions directed that he should not be prosecuted.<sup>317</sup>

254 Five of the witnesses to the Inquiry alleged sexual assault by DL 137, including two who gave evidence at his criminal trial: HIA 218, HIA 219, HIA 347, HIA 320 and HIA 227. The following examples indicate DL 137’s ways of grooming boys and encouraging them to join him in sexual activity, in some cases despite the Brother Director’s warning that he was not to mix with the boys.

255 HIA 320 was at the school in the mid 1970s, and he encountered DL 137. He stated that DL 137 was at that time one of the two chefs, but he also looked after the boys in the evenings and he took them to the swimming pool. HIA 320 recounts that DL 137:

“... kept putting his hand down my swimming pants and I really didn’t understand what was going on because I was so young”.

DL 137 also offered him cigarettes to go into the swimming pool to have sex with him, but HIA 320 refused:

“He was always at me and he would corner me sometimes and let on to jokingly wrestle but I was uncomfortable with this and I was afraid of him.”<sup>318</sup>

256 HIA 227 said that DL 137 abused him once, and that when he reported this to the police in 1997 it was one of the cases they used to prosecute him. DL 137 was playing table tennis with HIA 227, when he asked him to go into a room facing the staff canteen; there he started by feeling HIA 227’s penis through his trousers and went on to make the boy masturbate

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316 SPT 30158-30208, 30905-31015.

317 SPT 26100-SPT26101.

318 SPT 115.



him. DL 137 gave him fifty pence and told him not to tell anyone what had happened; he also invited HIA 227 to go back to the room on a few further occasions, but HIA 227 refused.

- 257 HIA 347 provided detailed information about five occasions when DL 137 abused him sexually. The first time was soon after his admission to St Patrick’s in 1979. On three occasions this was in a store room near the kitchen, where DL 137 encouraged HIA 347 to masturbate him or they mutually masturbated each other. On another occasion HIA 347 happened to meet DL 137 in a swimming pool in Belfast and the abuse took place in a cubicle, where oral sex was attempted. On the final occasion anal penetration was attempted unsuccessfully. HIA 347 asked DL 137 for money, so that he could get a train home, and he felt disgusted with himself when DL 137 gave him £5.<sup>319</sup>
- 258 In summary, if decisive action had been taken by BR 95 in 1978, when boys first complained about his conduct, the boys whom DL 137 subsequently abused at St Patrick’s would have avoided his attentions and those whom he later abused after leaving the school might also have avoided becoming his victims. BR 95 failed to inform either the police or his Board of Management, both in 1978 and in 1980, with the result that many more boys were abused. He compounded his negligent management of DL 137 by giving him a clear reference for further employment. The De La Salle Order has recognised that through the line of action taken by BR 95 as Brother Director they failed to deal with DL 137’s offending properly.
- 259 **We consider the failure of the Brother Director**
- (a) to inform both the police and his Committee of the allegations of abuse by DL 137 in 1978 and again in 1980,**
  - (b) to dismiss DL 137, permitting him to resign,**
  - (c) to protect potential victims of sexual abuse in providing DL 137 with a positive job reference which omitted the reason for his departure from St Patrick’s**
- to be systemic failures.**

### Peer Sexual Abuse

- 260 There are only three references to peer sexual abuse prior to the mid-1980s. HIA 100 said he was aware of peer sexual abuse in the mid-1960s, and that two boys abused him. He said that BR 47 turned a blind

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319 SPT 159-161.

eye to boys’ sexual behaviour and that no one was ever punished for peer sexual abuse.<sup>320</sup>

261 HIA 314 alleged that sexual activity took place during the boys’ Saturday trips to the cinema as there was only one person in charge of them:

“Everybody knew what was going on but nobody said anything. Masturbation was normal among the inmates and certain groups of older inmates would abuse the younger ones who were brought into their cliques.”<sup>321</sup>

“Sexual intercourse was not discouraged between the boys”.<sup>322</sup>

262 HIA 162, who was in St Patrick’s from 1973-1974, was “small and looked very feminine at that time” and he had “terrible experiences” when he shared a dormitory with the older boys on holiday in Cushendall. For the first week they made him give them oral sex and masturbate them; he then ran away, and believes that the staff must have known what was happening.<sup>323</sup>

263 BR 26 said that he came across sexual activity among boys occasionally, and dealt with it by talking to the boys and explaining that such behaviour was unacceptable. The boys involved were sometimes moved to other dormitories. There was informal discussion about the problem at housemasters’ meetings, but there seems to have been no formal policy adopted or concern expressed to or by the Board of Management.<sup>324</sup> In treating sexual activity as a behaviour which needed to be dealt with in the normal run of school life, it is possible that it was thought unnecessary to record such incidents.

264 Possibly following the publication of the Hughes Report in 1985, the practice changed, in that sexual activities among boys were reported to the police, as will be seen in the instances reported below. The focus of the Hughes Report had been on allegations of the homosexual abuse of boys by staff, and all homosexual relations had been against the law in Northern Ireland until 1982. No action was taken by the police concerning peer abuse among boys at St Patrick’s, however, but BR 26 said that the fact that cases were referred perhaps led to a diminution in the number of occasions on which boys were involved.<sup>325</sup>

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320 Day 138, p.152.

321 SPT 004.

322 SPT 005.

323 SPT 109.

324 Day 157, p.50.

325 Day 157, p.52.

- 265 On 15 February 1986 BR 42 found two boys in their bedroom engaged in consensual buggery. He moved one of the boys into a different bedroom and reported the matter to the police. Their enquiries uncovered homosexual contacts with men in the community involving three other boys as well. The police took no action against any of the boys as their sexual activity was seen as experimentation, but one of the adults was given a suspended prison sentence.<sup>326</sup>
- 266 On 19 October 1987 a boy, SPT 104, told his housemaster SPT 52 that he and another boy SPT 103 had been engaging for four months in consensual mutual buggery, but that he wanted to stop because of the risk of AIDS. SPT 52 informed BR 26, who contacted the police. The boys were questioned by the police. Further sexual activity with two other boys in the community was disclosed, but the other boys were not identified.<sup>327</sup>
- 267 On 4 February 1988 a 12 year old boy SPT 106 complained that a 15 year old boy, SPT 105, had sexually assaulted him while they were absconding from St Patrick’s. Police interviews revealed consensual mutual buggery over a longer period.<sup>328</sup> No action was taken despite their difference in age.
- 268 On 18 May 1994 a 14 year old boy, HIA 384, made allegations of sexual assault against a 15 year old, SPT 54, who was questioned by the police, but denied all the allegations. The 15 year old was, however, charged with buggery, gross indecency and indecent assault and placed in Lisnevin, later returning to the secure unit at St Patrick’s. Following further investigations the police concluded that “both parties were, to a certain extent, willing participants”, despite an element of bullying. The 14 year old withdrew his allegations. The situation was complicated by allegations and counter-allegations involving two other boys other boys, SPT 61 and SPT 63. The police concluded that the evidence was too unreliable for them to take action.<sup>329</sup>
- 269 In a large residential establishment for boys sexual behaviour of the type reported above can be expected from time to time. Although some coercive bullying was involved, the activities appear to have been largely consensual. When the staff of St Patrick’s received allegations they took appropriate action, whether dealing with the matter themselves prior to 1985 or reporting allegations to the police thereafter. There is no indication that the

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326 SPT 20157, 20164, 20169.

327 SPT 20392, 20400, 20401, 20409, 20410, 20418.

328 SPT 20425, 20426.

329 SPT 21144, 21148, 21149, 21162, 21176, 21189, 21194.

allegations were more than a series of isolated incidents or that there was a culture of peer sexual abuse which staff were neglecting. There is therefore insufficient evidence to suggest systemic abuse.

### Physical Abuse by Staff

270 In the early years, the regime at St Patrick’s was clearly fairly harsh. A small number of staff had the responsibility for maintaining control of a large number of boys, some of whom had long histories of offending and some of whom were seriously disturbed. Corporal punishment was used to keep order, sometimes according to the Training School Rules, with beatings witnessed and recorded, and sometimes informally, with cuffing and slapping with straps. When boys had misbehaved they accepted that such punishments were fair, but they resented what they saw as unwarranted punishments or excessive levels of violence. In 1948 there was an ecclesiastical inquiry into an allegation of physical assault, and as a result BR 70 was suspended, but following an investigation by the Ministry he was re-instated, as the boy making the allegations, SPT 30, was deemed an unreliable nuisance, and a hundred boys had petitioned for the brother to be allowed to stay on.<sup>330</sup>

271 HIA 229 wrote:

“The regime at St Patrick’s was very violent because a number of the brothers were very violent. I was terrified of them. I received a beating with a leather strap and was punched and kicked. It went far beyond any chastisement for misbehaving. [BR 4] slapped me frequently and he used a strap most of the time. I remember one occasion that I was standing in the corridor and he was carrying a bunch of keys in his hand. For no reason at all, he hit me on the side of the head with the keys. I could not hear properly for about a week but I did not receive any medical attention. I was too afraid to ask for help.”<sup>331</sup>

272 HIA 282 wrote that when he was admitted in 1964 he was well treated at first:

“However after a few days I started to get smacked on the back of the head or kicks on the backside when the Brothers were walking past me. These were for no reason whatsoever. The Brothers simply hit you and walked on without saying a word. This happened to me and to other boys frequently. I literally became afraid of them ...”<sup>332</sup>

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330 SPT 10553, 10555.

331 SPT 010.

332 SPT 041-042.

- 273 HIA 282’s stay at St Patrick’s was not long, and shortly before he left he:  
“must have received ten or fifteen thumps with the strap on my head and back”

for dropping crumbs from a sausage roll he was eating. There were marks all over his back and “a couple of lumps” on his head. When he got home his father happened to see the marks on his back, and went with a friend to confront the brothers, who threatened to call the police.<sup>333</sup>

- 274 HIA 100 named three brothers, BR 83, BR 94 and BR 47, as being violent or frightening. He wrote:

“You would get the odd punch in the ribs, you were forever getting slapped and hit across the back of the head and stuff like that. They would hit you if you were cheeky or did not do what you were told but to be honest they did not need an excuse to hit you. I was just riddled with fear of them all the time.”<sup>334</sup>

- 275 HIA 58 said that he was thrown into the swimming pool when he was unable to swim for attempting to abscond. He wrote that BR 26, a “tall skinny brother” and two others threw him into the “six foot end”, and that it was “torture” to him; he never learned to swim but is still very scared of water as a result:

“The punishment was so bad that I only tried to escape twice”.<sup>335</sup>

- 276 HIA 272 described the way that BR 5 strapped him in the gym on a Sunday morning in front of the rest of the boys and other staff. He was bent over a chair in his boxer shorts and was given “six whips of the strap”, which was made of leather, about eighteen inches long, with a split in it. These punishments were for theft and breaking a window.<sup>336</sup>

- 277 HIA 344 was admitted to St Patrick’s in 1973; his main complaint concerned two lay housemasters, SPT 1 and SPT 2, alleging that they frequently slapped him on the back of the head, hit him with boots and flicked wet towels at him like a whip, causing big welts on his back and the backs of his legs. When he broke a saw blade, he was also punched in the eye by a woodwork teacher, SPT 89, resulting in a black eye. He puts his absconding mainly down to a wish to escape the physical abuse, and

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333 SPT 044.

334 SPT 050.

335 SPT 057, 058.

336 SPT 080-081.

his description of life at St Patrick’s otherwise indicates satisfaction with conditions. However, his absconding ended with his removal to Crumlin Road Prison and then Armagh Borstal.<sup>337</sup>

278 HIA 94 was also admitted in 1973, and like HIA 344, he alleges that the same two housemasters, SPT 1 and SPT 2, beat him when he was placed in a cell as punishment. He also states that on a few occasions the brothers made the boys get in a shower naked and then beat them with a strap with lead in it.<sup>338</sup> HIA 94 had been moved from Rubane when he was beyond control there, and after seven months at St Patrick’s he was moved on to Lisnevin for the same reason.<sup>339</sup>

279 HIA 320 was in St Patrick’s in the mid to late 1970s and he described a violent atmosphere, with “a few members of staff who were a bit vicious”, including both housemasters, SPT 2 and SPT 78, and brothers, naming BR 4. Boys were punched or beaten with straps. SPT 2 said that he had had to man-handle HIA 320 into a time-out room, but never assaulted him. He also cast doubt on HIA 320’s evidence.

280 HIA 227 was at St Patrick’s in the same period as HIA 320 and he also noted the use of the leather strap by housemasters and the extensive bullying by older boys. As he was one of the youngest boys in the school he found it “hell at times”.<sup>340</sup> HIA 54 was also there in the same period, and he recalled the brothers beating boys with leather straps and being hit over the head with a bunch of keys by BR 50.<sup>341</sup>

281 HIA 50 was only in St Patrick’s briefly at the end of 1986. He says he was beaten daily by two boys, but it was the caretaker whom he feared, who caned him across his “back, head, neck and across the back of the legs” when the police returned him from absconding.<sup>342</sup> HIA 275, who was admitted in 1987, made a similar statement about a watchman SPT 64, who:

“physically assaulted me almost every time I returned to St Patrick’s after absconding. He threw me into a cold shower and beat me with a big blackthorn stick he used to have. He hit me up to fifteen times with the stick and I was often bruised.”

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337 SPT 091-092.

338 SPT 099.

339 SPT 100.

340 SPT 129.

341 SPT 152.

342 SPT 187.

Another lay member of staff was cruel and hit him with wet towels or a bunch of keys. He had no complaints about the brothers.<sup>343</sup>

- 282 BR 94 candidly stated that he strapped boys and gave some a clip round the ear.<sup>344</sup> Otherwise, the brothers and lay staff who gave evidence all denied physical abuse. Formal recorded punishments were acknowledged, but the excessive and informal punishments described above were denied. We did not find the denials persuasive.
- 283 The accounts of the former residents and former staff of physical abuse are clearly at odds, but the volume and detail of the allegations are more persuasive than the denials. The emotional weight attached to the physical attacks will probably have rendered their memory more significant to the victims than to the abusers. It should be noted that most of the allegations of physical abuse relate to the 1960s and early 1970s. The abuse alleged in the 1980s appears to have related largely to one member of night staff. This would suggest that the practice of casual physical abuse as a means of control generally died out in the last two decades of St Patrick’s existence. **The prevalence of unauthorised physical punishment in the 1960s and early 1970s was, however, contrary to the Training School Rules, and constituted systemic abuse.**

### Peer Physical Abuse

- 284 There appears to have been an undercurrent of violence and bullying which came and went from time to time, depending in part on the discharge of older boys who, sometimes in groups, intimidated younger ones. It is a common feature in residential child care that the atmosphere established by the staff is replicated among the children, whether for good or ill, and where the atmosphere is abusive it can have a corrupting effect. The harsh regime imposed by the staff in the 1960s and early 1970s, with the use of physical force to maintain control, may therefore have provided a model for relationships among the boys. Many of the boys will, however, also have experienced violence at home or been belted at school or, during the Troubles, even experienced punishment beatings, or the threat of them, at the hands of paramilitaries. Physical punishments by staff will only have confirmed such boys’ experience that ‘might is right’ in obtaining what they wanted.

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343 SPT 193.

344 Day 147, pp.31 and 32.

- 285 HIA 162 described an occasion when two older boys who used to beat him took him to Black Mountain and “tortured” him, saying that they were from the IRA (a claim he did not believe) and that he was an informer. He was bleeding and bruised when he got back to St Patrick’s but he received no treatment. This appears to have been a one-off event.<sup>345</sup>
- 286 HIA 162 said that birthdays were celebrated by boys gathering round, singing “Happy Birthday” and then giving the birthday boy a kicking.<sup>346</sup>
- 287 HIA 320 commendably admitted to having become a bully in order to survive, a fact of which he is now ashamed:
- “There was frequent bullying going on and I ended up being a bully myself. There was a tier system between the boys and I was able to handle myself but I hate myself for that today”.<sup>347</sup>
- 288 In view of the limited range of examples provided by witnesses, peer physical abuse does not seem to have been a persistent problem.

### Emotional Abuse

- 289 HIA 96 was the only witness to allege that he had been emotionally abused. He felt that he had been “kidnapped” by the state and should not have been at St Patrick’s at all.<sup>348</sup> He therefore saw any denial of contact with his family as emotionally abusive, and alleged that staff manipulated the points system so that he could not go home.<sup>349</sup> He also alleged that he was placed in Slemish House for punishment without justification, after an incident had escalated when he fought back after an unjust accusation.<sup>350</sup> While we have no reason to doubt the allegation, no other witnesses alleged emotional abuse.
- 290 As it was a large institution, much of the care offered by St Patrick’s must have been fairly basic and impersonal; it would only have been in its last two decades that staffing was sufficient to pay adequate personal attention to individual boys. However, unlike some of the other large homes we have considered, a substantial number of the boys came to St Patrick’s from their family homes and they had experienced parental care in their early years. Indeed, continued contact with families was encouraged at

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345 SPT 108.

346 Day 140, p.64.

347 SPT 115.

348 SPT 217.

349 SPT 221-222.

350 SPT 221.



St Patrick’s, and many boys were visited regularly and/or went home at weekends. They would not, therefore, generally have experienced the emotional deprivation that children brought up throughout their lives in residential care from nursery onwards would have suffered.

- 291 It is our conclusion that emotional abuse was not a systemic problem in St Patrick’s.

### **Neglect**

- 292 Some witnesses said that they were always hungry, or that their clothes were second-hand, but such references were few. Others said that they did not receive medical treatment for injuries, such as HIA 26. He slashed his wrists and BR 26 cleaned and bandaged the wounds.<sup>351</sup> In view of the large numbers of boys who were admitted to St Patrick’s over its lengthy history, these allegations do not present a picture of neglect sufficient to term it systemic. This conclusion does not invalidate the witnesses’ experiences, but reflects the need for more substantial evidence to determine that problems were systemic.

## **Allegations of Unacceptable Practices**

### **Silence at Meals**

- 293 HIA 100 mentioned that when he was at St Patrick’s, from 1964 to 1966, boys were not allowed to speak at meal times.<sup>352</sup> He recalled an incident in which eight boys had been lined up for talking in dinner.<sup>353</sup> Requiring silence in mealtimes was a carry-over from earlier institutional practice when it was a common means of maintaining order if a large number of children were gathered in one place, since the maintenance of control was a sine qua non of such establishments.
- 294 However, by the mid-1960s child care practice was changing and, since meals were now thought of as social occasions, maintaining silence was considered poor child care, though it could not be termed systemic abuse. The practice generally changed when smaller units were introduced and meals could be taken in family-sized groups. When the chalets were opened at St Patrick’s, for example, the boys ate in their units in groups of about ten.<sup>354</sup>

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351 SPT 074.

352 Day 138, p.128.

353 Day 138, p.128.

354 Day 140, p, 85.

### Excessive Chores

295 Unlike some other homes, there were few allegations about boys having to do excessive chores. HIA 58 said that he had to polish three dormitories on his own, “when the Belfast boys were out” with cloths under his feet, and that he had to wash pots and pans in the kitchen for six months, suffering dermatitis as a result.<sup>355</sup> Again, while such demands would have been excessive, the small number of complaints does not amount to systemic abuse.

### Interception of Post

296 HIA 58 said that in the late 1960s his mother enclosed money in her letters which did not reach him,<sup>356</sup> and in the early 1970s HIA 162 alleged that letters were put on his file and were not given to him.<sup>357</sup> HIA 384 also complained that his mail was intercepted in the 1990s when he was in Slemish House, which was at that time a secure intensive care unit.<sup>358</sup> As a member of staff, SPT 2 said that the post in Slemish House was not intercepted, but that boys opened their letters in the presence of staff.<sup>359</sup>

297 It would have been reasonable practice for money to be removed from letters and banked for the boys, in order to avoid the temptation of theft by other boys or the use of the money for inappropriate purposes. It would have been unacceptable for children and young people to be prevented from reading their letters unless there were exceptional reasons, but during much of the Inquiry’s remit post would still have been intercepted and possibly read before it was passed to children in some homes and schools. The practices described by HIA 158 and HIA 62 would therefore probably have been unacceptable. However, there is insufficient evidence that the practice was widespread and we are not persuaded that it amounted to systemic abuse.

### Failure to Take Action

298 A number of witnesses said that they informed other people who they thought would be sympathetic that they were being abused, but that they were not believed. In some cases the people approached simply felt it was beyond belief that brothers would abuse children sexually. It was also

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355 SPT 058, 059.

356 Day 139, p.16.

357 Day 140, p.29.

358 SPT 50165.

359 Day 143, pp. 83 and 84.

because of this perception that boys did not report abuse, for example to their parents.

299 HIA 314 wrote:

“I couldn’t tell my parents about the abuse as they were very religious and would not accept that a member of the Catholic Church would do such a thing. There were two nuns there and they must have known about the abuse. We tried to mention it to the nuns because we thought we might get a bit of support or help from a woman but they just called us liars and hit us.”<sup>360</sup>

300 HIA 229 told the bandmaster, who was strict and demanding but “a good man”, about the abuse boys were suffering. The bandmaster told HIA 229 to leave it with him, but HIA 229 heard no more and does not know whether he took action.

301 HIA 272 told his housemaster SPT 2 whom he considered “a genuine and good person” about the abuse he was suffering. SPT 2 wrote out a statement and said he was going to act on it; HIA 272 heard no more, but surmises that SPT 2 was in a difficult predicament as he would have lost his job if he had complained. HIA 272 also mentioned a news story about abuse to his mother, but she did not want to believe that brothers would abuse people.<sup>361</sup> SPT 2 denied that he recorded HIA 272’s statement and that he failed to take action in consequence. He pointed out that there was no corroboration of HIA 272’s account, and that his job would not have been at risk if he was simply acting as a messenger on HIA 272’s behalf. He said he would have acted on a report of sexual abuse.

302 HIA 162 made a complaint to one of the welfare staff, SPT 48, and he alleged that within an hour he was beaten and placed in a punishment cell where he was kept for three or four days. The cell had no windows but light was admitted through glass bricks. There was a hard bed with half a mattress, no food and no call system.<sup>362</sup> The brothers denied that any boy was held in a cell for this length of time.

303 HIA 314 reported that he had told the Bon Secours nuns who worked at St Patrick’s about the abuse he had suffered. They called him a liar and hit him. The nuns may have been SR 74 and SR 75.<sup>363</sup>

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360 SPT 006.

361 SPT 083-4.

362 SPT 110.

363 SPT 006.

- 304 In all of these cases, the proper practice was of course that those in receipt of complaints should have taken matters up with appropriate senior managers, or other responsible persons. However, for much of the period covered by the Inquiry’s remit, the common way of thinking was that children who made allegations lacked credibility and it was unthinkable that religious and professionals would abuse children. People taking up the complaints also could possibly have jeopardised their jobs or their working relationships with their colleagues, and would have had to face the authority of the Roman Catholic Church or the state. It is understandable therefore at a human level if they failed to put themselves at risk in this way and challenge the system.
- 305 The Brothers, however, as a matter of good practice, should have created an atmosphere in which both staff and boys felt able to make complaints and report abuse. **We consider it a systemic failure that a culture existed that meant that potential whistle-blowers felt unable to speak up.**
- 306 Following the introduction of new complaints procedures with the Children Order 1995, there should now be no excuse for individuals who fail to report allegations of abuse.
- 307 As noted above, the police followed up the allegations made by SPT 96 against BR 26 and others very thoroughly.

## Conclusion

- 308 St Patrick’s played a key role in the training school system in Northern Ireland, providing education, trade training and care for boys from the Roman Catholic community. For the most part it appears to have fulfilled this role effectively, admitting 4,537 boys in the course of its 126 years history. The physical standards of care provided were adequate; the regime could be described as harsh, but for much of the time it was no more punitive than the day school system in the wider community, and HIA 96’s description of the school as a “war zone”, a continuous battle between staff and boys in which the state and Church combined to hold boys against their will, is not supported by the evidence of other witnesses.<sup>364</sup>
- 309 The main defect in residential care practice at St Patrick’s was the persistent high level of absconding. The proximity of the school to the city of Belfast certainly exacerbated this problem but, although some

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364 Day 142, p.123.

measures were taken such as the opening of the secure unit in Slemish House, this issue was never adequately addressed or solved.

- 310 The Troubles presented acute problems for the school. Managing a large school for young offenders and disturbed adolescents is an exceptionally difficult task at the best of times, and it is to the credit of the staff and managers that St Patrick’s kept going throughout this difficult period. It was, however, during the Troubles that one of St Patrick’s two tragedies occurred with the death of Bernard Teggart, abducted and murdered by the IRA. The conduct of some of the staff during this episode was also questionable.
- 311 The second tragedy was the death of SPT 81, accidentally run over by other boys from St Patrick’s, ‘joy-riding’ while absconding. The event highlighted the need for improvements in staffing and staff deployment, as well as the serious dangers associated with absconding.
- 312 There was both physical and sexual abuse at St Patrick’s. There were three members of staff - two brothers and a chef - who between them were the source of about a third of the allegations of sexual abuse. All three were investigated by the police, who for different reasons took no action in relation to the two brothers, but the chef served a prison sentence for his offences. The remaining allegations were made against 24 brothers, 1 priest and 10 lay staff, or 38 adults in total, mostly in ones and twos in different years, suggesting no particular pattern of systemic abuse, though in the early 1960s there were allegations that there was a culture of low level sexual abuse in public among the brothers.
- 313 The allegations of physical abuse for the most part seem to have reflected the harsh regime, but there were a few occasions when formal punishment was excessive and there were periods such as the early 1970s when staff appear to have indulged in casual unjustified attacks on boys, perhaps as a way of asserting their control but creating an atmosphere of violence in the process.
- 314 Unsurprisingly in a large establishment for boys there was bullying, fighting, peer physical abuse and peer sexual abuse, perhaps partly influenced by the model offered by some of the staff and partly arising from the earlier experiences of boys who had suffered abuse at home.
- 315 At the start of the period covered by the witnesses’ evidence the school moved from Milltown to a new large building in Glen Road, and was over time remodelled by providing smaller units and a more homely model of care. Staffing and staff training were also considerably improved. In consequence over its last four decades the school developed from a highly institutional

regime to a residential social work model, which by the time of the school’s closure was well up to date.

- 316 Without in any way diminishing the significance of the two tragic deaths or the suffering of the 24 applicants who shared their experiences of abuse at the hearings of the Inquiry, these failings have to be seen in the context of the 4537 boys who went through the doors of St Patrick’s, some of whom clearly enjoyed and benefited from their stay.
- 317 On behalf of the Diocese of Down and Connor the Very Reverend Timothy Bartlett expressed their sincere and profound apologies to any person who had been abused while at St Patrick’s, especially in view of the high ideals espoused by the members of the Order when acting in loco parentis.<sup>365</sup>

## Summary of Findings

- 318 The following are the issues which we consider constituted systemic abuse at St Patrick’s:
- (a) **We consider that the failure of St Patrick’s to conform to the Training School Rules in respect of secure accommodation and of the Inspectorate to note the breaches and take action, constituted systemic abuse. (Para. 75)**
  - (b) **We consider the use of informal corporal punishment was systemic abuse. (Para. 84)**
  - (c) **We consider that permitting older boys to punish others when supervising them in the dormitory was a breach of the Training School Rules and was systemic abuse. (Para. 88)**
  - (d) **The humiliation of stripping a boy naked to stand in full view on a number of occasions constituted systemic abuse. (Para. 91)**
  - (e) **The failure to report the abductions of Bernard and Gerard Teggart to the Police was clearly a systemic shortcoming on the part of the Brother Director. The failure of the Board of Management to meet immediately after the boy’s death, to investigate and to provide support to the staff and boys was negligent and constituted systemic abuse. (Para. 119)**
  - (f) **There is nothing to suggest that the NIO took any steps following the death of Bernard Teggart to investigate whether any policies or procedures needed to be changed to protect**

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365 SPT 855.

boys from suffering a similar fate, and their failure to do so represents a systemic failing on their part. (Para. 120)

- (g) Statistical returns concerning absconding were provided by St Patrick’s to the NIO and these records would have been open to Inspectors when they visited. Prior to the concern raised by the death of SPT 81 neither the NIO nor the SSI had raised absconding as a major issue with St Patrick’s and we consider this a systemic failure on their part. (Para. 136)
- (h) The failure to circulate the findings of the report on absconding from Rathgael more widely and assist St Patrick’s in finding ways of dealing with persistent absconding was a systemic failure on the part of the NIO. (Para. 137)
- (i) Furthermore, the APRU, which had been set up as a combined unit to support all the training schools and which had undertaken the research on absconding, also failed to share their findings with St Patrick’s, when they must have known that it had a similar problem. (Para. 138)
- (j) The failure of St Patrick’s to take adequate measures to counter absconding constituted systemic abuse, in that it left boys vulnerable in terms of the risks they faced when absconding, in the patterns of criminality which were fostered while absconding, and in the effect of their absconding pattern on their later lives. (Para. 141)
- (k) We consider that the frequency with which the secure rooms were used and their use for young children, contrary to the Training School Rules, amounted to systemic abuse on the part of St Patrick’s and by the SSI in failing to address this breach of the Rules. (Para. 168)
- (m) The failure to appoint sufficient staff amounts to negligent management, and we consider it to be a systemic failure. (Para. 178)
- (n) St Patrick’s was not inspected between 1971 and 1988, and we consider the lack of formal inspections a systemic failing. (Para. 186)
- (o) We therefore consider the sexual abuse perpetrated by the Brothers, particularly as reported in the television room, to have been systemic. (Para. 223)

- (p) The Order has stated that they do not see the allegations as well founded, but it is our view that BR 1 sexually abused boys while he was at St Patrick’s and that this constituted systemic abuse; if he had been apprehended and had not been promoted to be Brother Director of Rubane House, the boys there would not have been abused by him. (Para. 229)**
- (q) It is our view that, taking account of current practice in the mid-1990s, Bishop Farquhar was at fault in failing to suspend BR 26 during the police enquiries and in undertaking their own limited investigation, and that these failures were systemic, potentially putting the boys then and subsequently at St Patrick’s at risk. (Para. 242)**
- (r) We consider the failure of the Brother Director:**

  - (i) to inform both the police and his Committee of the allegations of abuse by DL 137 in 1978 and again in 1980,**
  - (ii) to dismiss DL 137, permitting him to resign,**
  - (iii) to protect potential victims of sexual abuse in providing DL 137 with a positive job reference which omitted the reason for his departure from St Patrick’s to be systemic failures. (Para. 259)**
- (s) The prevalence of unauthorised physical punishment in the 1960s and early 1970s was contrary to the Training School Rules, and constituted systemic abuse. (Para. 283)**
- (t) We consider it a systemic failure that potential whistle-blowers felt unable to speak up. (Para. 305)**