

## Chapter 18:

### Module 11 – St Joseph’s Training School, Middletown

	<b>Para</b>
Introduction.. . . . .	1
The Sisters of St Louis.. . . . .	10
Establishment of St Joseph’s.. . . . .	13
Governance of St Joseph’s.. . . . .	17
Development of St Joseph’s .. . . . .	30
Admission of girls to St Joseph’s .. . . . .	39
Regulation and Inspection of St Joseph’s .. . . . .	43
Regulation of St Joseph’s from 1987 onwards . . . . .	58
Physical Abuse .. . . . .	74
Visiting Priests. . . . .	164
Peer Abuse .. . . . .	169
Use of Intensive Care Unit (ICU). . . . .	175
Sexual Abuse .. . . . .	188
Emotional Abuse. . . . .	194
Neglect	
Medical Treatment . . . . .	213
Education . . . . .	223
Enuresis. . . . .	231
Unacceptable Practices	
Excessive Chores .. . . . .	233
Force Feeding.. . . . .	241
Separation of Siblings .. . . . .	244
A False Impression Created for Inspectors . . . . .	251
Religious Observance .. . . . .	253
Food .. . . . .	256
Smoking .. . . . .	259
Lack of Preparation for Leaving Care .. . . . .	262
Conclusion .. . . . .	270
Summary of Findings. . . . .	277

## Introduction

- 1 In Module 11 we considered evidence about St Joseph’s Training School (St Joseph’s) which was run by a Roman Catholic congregation, the Sisters of St Louis. Module 11 commenced on 8 February 2016 and concluded on 22 February 2016. We received evidence from sixteen former residents of the school, five of whom gave evidence in person during Module 11: HIA 203; HIA 178; HIA 161; HIA 198; and HIA 376.
- 2 The statements of two former residents, HIA 249 and HIA 176, were summarised and read out during Module 11 because they were unable for medical reasons to give evidence in person. We also took into account statements from three former residents of St Joseph’s who wanted to tell us about their positive memories of the care they received in the school: SJM 73; SJM 74; and SJM 75.
- 3 Two former residents, HIA 49 (Day 9) and HIA 233 (Day 16) gave evidence in person about their time in St Joseph’s during Module 1, which dealt with children’s homes in Londonderry run by the Sisters of Nazareth. Four other former residents - HIA 124 (Day 96), HIA 195 (Day 101), HIA 175 (Day 100), and HIA 84 (Day 109) - gave evidence in person about their time in St Joseph’s during Module 4, which dealt with children’s homes in Belfast run by the Sisters of Nazareth.
- 4 During Module 11 we heard evidence in person from four nuns who worked in St Joseph’s: SR 235, SR 234, SR 247 and Sister Canice Durkan. We considered helpful statements from SR 240 who was the Director of St Joseph’s for almost thirty years from 1972 to 2000. Unfortunately SR 240 was unable for medical reasons to give evidence in person. We also considered a statement from SR 254. In addition to these statements the Sisters of St Louis provided written responses to the statements of former residents and related contemporaneous documentation.
- 5 A former member of lay staff of St Joseph’s, SJM 4, provided a statement in response to allegations made against her and a written closing submission. SJM 56, who was HIA 176’s social worker when she was in St Joseph’s, provided a statement about his work with HIA 176.
- 6 We were assisted in developing our understanding of the establishment and operation of St Joseph’s by the access we were given to extensive records relating to the school, which were maintained and retained by the Sisters of St Louis. These included daily logs, visitors’ books, punishment

books, the minutes of meetings of the Board of Management and quarterly returns about the use of corporal punishment, which were submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). We were also assisted by police material and civil claim papers in relation to St Joseph’s.

- 7 The Department of Justice (DoJ) provided a general statement about St Joseph’s and written responses to the statements provided by former residents. However, it was unable to provide detailed responses to the statements of applicant witnesses born before 1957 as its records for residents of St Joseph’s only extend back to those born after that year. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) provided witness statements about the inspection and regulation of St Joseph’s.
- 8 The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) provided a general statement about St Joseph’s and written responses and background documentation about the involvement that any of its predecessor bodies had in the care of applicant witnesses.
- 9 The Sisters of St Louis, the DoJ, HSCB and the DHSSPS also provided written closing submissions. We are grateful for the evidence all witnesses provided for this module and the assistance it gave us in considering whether there were systemic failings in the care provided in St. Joseph’s.

## **The Sisters of St Louis**

- 10 The origins of the Sisters of St Louis can be traced back to 1797 in Turkenstein, near Strasbourg, when Abbé Louis Joseph Colmar, Marie Madeline Louise Humann, and Thérèse Brek signed a spiritual act of union. In 1842, a priest named Louis Bautain, influenced by the trio’s spiritual path, officially founded the Institute of St Louis, in Juilly outside Paris, to promote Christian education for young people. The Institute of men and women was approved by the Vatican in July 1844, but by 1850 the priests disbanded, leaving the sisters remaining in the order.
- 11 In 1859, Mother Genevieve led the first group of sisters to Ireland. The sisters came to Ireland at the request of the Bishop of Clogher to open a reformatory in Monaghan town to care for deprived children. Two years later, the Irish foundation separated from the French Institute on the Bishop’s orders, as he did not wish it to continue to be governed from France.

- 12 For the next nine decades the Irish and French Institutes expanded separately across Ireland and France. In 1903, the first Belgian foundation was established by the French Institute, and in 1912, the first English foundation was established from Ireland. However, by the end of the Second World War numbers in the French Institute had declined significantly, and in 1952 it amalgamated with the St Louis Institute in Ireland.

## Establishment of St Joseph’s

- 13 The Sisters of St Louis came to Middletown, County Armagh, in 1875. The foundation of St Joseph’s was laid in 1876 at a site approximately ten miles south-west of Armagh city on the fringe of the village of Middletown. A convent and an industrial school/orphanage were opened on 25 June 1881. St Joseph’s was the second industrial school to be opened in Ireland and its operation and management was governed by the Industrial Schools (Ireland) Act 1868 and subsequently the Children and Young Persons Act 1908.
- 14 Eight girls were admitted to the school on the day it opened and came from as far apart as Dublin, Belfast and Donegal. The admission records for the first group of children described most of them as “destitute orphans found begging”, and many were as young as four years of age.<sup>1</sup>
- 15 Over the next 50 years there was extensive development of the site with the establishment of a private boarding school and a primary school. With the partition of Ireland, admissions of children from the Republic of Ireland virtually ceased. In 1942 the Sisters of St Louis decided to close the boarding school and concentrate their efforts on the industrial school/orphanage.
- 16 In 1950 the MoHA invited St Joseph’s to become a training school, within the terms of the Children and Young Person’s Act (Northern Ireland) 1950. This invitation was accepted and the industrial school/orphanage was closed, although, the children who were resident in it at that time remained in St Joseph’s until they reached adulthood or were discharged. Two of these former residents, HIA 249 and HIA 178, gave evidence to the Inquiry.

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1 LSN 266.

## Governance of St Joseph’s

- 17 St Joseph’s was established as a training school under the terms of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and the associated Training School Rules (Northern Ireland) 1952 and subsequently the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968. In 1950, the trustees of St Joseph’s who were members of the Congregation of St Louis and the Archbishop of Armagh entered into a Deed of Trust with the MoHA. This Deed of Trust formed the basis of the governance arrangements for the school.<sup>2</sup>
- 18 Registration as a training school was subject to a number of conditions including the establishment of a Board of Management.<sup>3</sup> The Board of Management established for St Joseph’s included representatives of the Trustees of St Joseph’s, members of the Congregation of St Louis and local clergy appointed by the Archbishop of Armagh in his capacity as trustee.<sup>4</sup> While the Board of Management had responsibility for maintaining, managing and controlling the school it was answerable to the trustees of St Joseph’s.
- 19 The other conditions of registration were that no children would be admitted to the school on a voluntary basis and the school would not refuse to take a child placed there by a court order. Since St Joseph’s was meeting a statutory need the MoHA agreed to meet 100% of the revenue expenditure for the school.<sup>5</sup>
- 20 It is clear from contemporaneous correspondence that by September 1964 officials in the MoHA were becoming concerned about the operation of the school and the lack of oversight by the Board of Management. Officials raised these concerns with Cardinal Conway, the then Archbishop of Armagh, at a meeting with him in September 1964 to discuss various matters relating to the care of deprived children. Mr Parkes, of the MoHA, reiterated these concerns in writing to Cardinal Conway in a letter dated 15 November 1965. He wrote, that despite the devoted efforts of it staff, St Joseph’s was:
- “...tending rather to lag behind current developments in the Training School service”

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2 SJM 22717.

3 SJM 26372.

4 SJM 22718.

5 SJM 26372.

and that officials were having:

“...difficulty in persuading the Manager [who was then SR 237] to be a little more progressive and adventurous in outlook.”<sup>6</sup>

- 21 Mr Parkes also pointed out that since the school was funded entirely from public funds it was required by law to be under the control of a Board of Management, which, in addition to controlling the general policy of the school, should take a personal interest in many aspects of the welfare of the girls. He stated that in practice officials found:

“...that the Board has played virtually no part in any aspect in the life of the school.”<sup>7</sup>

- 22 Mr Parkes explained that he was approaching the cardinal for his assistance because the Board of Management of St Joseph’s was seeking funding for recreation and classroom accommodation, which the MoHA was reluctant to provide without a complete reappraisal of the operation of the school. He indicated that a further consideration for the MoHA was that it had recently received a tentative proposal from the Good Shepherd Order to establish a training school for girls in Belfast. In relation to this development, Mr Parkes explained that officials were keen to have the Church’s view on this matter as the Ministry was not well placed to take a decision should the need arise:

“...which may involve a choice between the possibly conflicting claims of the St. Louis and Good Shepherd Orders.”<sup>8</sup>

- 23 Cardinal Conway responded by letter on 27 November 1965<sup>9</sup> and suggested a meeting with officials in December 1965. However, it is clear from a further letter from Mr Parkes to the cardinal in May 1966 that for some reason the proposed meeting in December 1965 did not go ahead.
- 24 In this subsequent letter of 4 May 1966, Mr Parkes reiterated officials’ concerns about the operation of St Joseph’s and explained that following a meeting the previous week with the Reverend Mother of Middletown convent, the secretary of the Board of Management and the director of the school SR 237, officials were minded to consider immediate funding of temporary additional accommodation on the clear understanding that a

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6 SJM 28224.

7 SJM 28224.

8 SJM 28224.

9 SJM 28226.

complete re-assessment would be made of the method of caring for the girls in St Joseph’s.<sup>10</sup>

- 25 Mr Parkes concluded his letter by raising again the suggestion from the Good Shepherd Order that it should provide training school facilities in Belfast. He reaffirmed that the views of the Catholic Church would be of paramount importance in determining the provision of training school accommodation for Catholic girls in Northern Ireland.<sup>11</sup>
- 26 Cardinal Conway responded in writing on 18 May 1966. He confirmed he had discussions with the Mother General of the Order of St Louis and had agreed to assist in providing “new blood” for the Board of Management of St Joseph’s and that the refreshed Board would be tasked to undertake a reappraisal of the methods used in the school. He indicated that this reappraisal would be informed by consideration of the operation of similar establishments in other parts of the United Kingdom. Cardinal Conway also confirmed that the Mother General had agreed that two members of St Joseph’s staff would be released for relevant professional training in 1968, two in 1969 and one or two in 1970.<sup>12</sup>
- 27 These undertakings were sufficient to reassure the MoHA and it agreed to invest capital funding in the renovation and extension of facilities in St Joseph’s. It also agreed to fund the establishment and operation of a pre-release/after care unit in Belfast linked to St Joseph’s and run by the Sisters of St Louis.
- 28 However, the MoHA decided that some safeguards were required in order to justify the 100% public funding of capital expenditure by a voluntary organisation. Consequently in May 1972 an indenture between the Board of Management and its successor or successors and the MoHA was drawn up.<sup>13</sup> This indenture included the safeguards that the property would be vested and that the trustees would undertake to manage the school and in the event of mismanagement or a withdrawal from the work the trustees would repay all monies granted.<sup>14</sup> The Government for its part undertook to maintain St Joseph’s as a training school and not to change its use or role arbitrarily.<sup>15</sup>

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10 SJM 28227.  
11 SJM 28228.  
12 SJM 28229.  
13 SJM 22741  
14 SJM 26373  
15 SJM 26374

- 29 In relation to the MoHA’s concerns about the Board of Management’s lack of involvement in the school, Sister Canice Durkan confirmed on behalf of the Sisters of St Louis that from the mid-1960s, the Board played a more active role in the management of the school.<sup>16</sup> We noted from the minutes of meetings of the Board of Management that from that time it met at least quarterly and its sub-committees, which dealt with matters such as staffing, finance and licensing of girls, met more regularly. It was also clear from the minutes that the Board of Management contributed to the development of policy for the care of the girls and the handling of disciplinary matters.

## Development of St Joseph’s

- 30 One of the first members of St Joseph’s staff sent on professional qualifying training as a result of the interventions by the MoHA and Cardinal Conway was SR 240 who had commenced working in St Joseph’s in 1967. SR 240 completed a Diploma in Social Work in Leicester University in 1968 and returned to St Joseph’s where she was appointed deputy director in 1969 and then promoted to the role of director in 1972. She remained as director for almost thirty years until the school closed in 2000 and it is clear from the evidence we have heard that she played a major role in modernising the school and developing a child-centred ethos that underpinned all areas of its operation.
- 31 An early example of the impact SR 240 had on the development of the school was the successful negotiations she initiated with the MoHA about how the school should be renovated and extended. Prior to the renovations the living, school and administrative accommodation for the training school were housed in one building. The sleeping facilities consisted of three dormitories, each accommodating eleven or twelve girls. Girls were allocated to the dormitories which were designated for senior, intermediate and junior girls according to their age. The Sisters of St Louis told us that the MoHA proposed that one block should be built to replace this accommodation and should include a large central kitchen and communal bathroom facilities but that SR 240 successfully insisted that four smaller house units should be built, to mirror, as far as possible, a family home.<sup>17</sup>

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16 SJM 22718.

17 SJM 30107.



- 32 These units were built in two blocks. Each block contained two units which were linked together by a connecting corridor at ground and first floor levels. Each unit was self-contained and consisted of single bedrooms, bathrooms, a kitchen and a living room. The original training school building was adapted to become the main school building and administrative block.
- 33 The units were called La Sallette, Lourdes, Fatima and Banneux<sup>18</sup> but became known by staff and girls as Houses 1, 2, 3 and 4 and that is how we will refer to them in this report. House 1 was a reception, assessment and short-term unit. Houses 2, 3 and 4 were long-term units.<sup>19</sup> SR 235 told us that the houses had different cultures and regimes. Girls who were assessed as needing a more regimented approach were allocated to House 2, while a more relaxed approach was adopted in House 3 and House 4 and girls were given more freedom in those houses. Each house usually accommodated up to eight girls, but when emergency admissions were required they could accommodate ten girls.
- 34 In the early 1970s additional staff accommodation, a swimming pool, a games hall and a modern bungalow were added. The bungalow was used as an Independence Training Unit, to assist girls to prepare for life after care. It supplemented the existing after-care facilities run by the congregation in Belfast, which were housed on the Upper Falls Road and then moved to the Glen Road. The Sisters of St Louis told us that the after-care facilities in Belfast benefitted from a support network of befriending families, voluntary workers, as well as collaboration with voluntary agencies and women’s groups. They also benefitted from the services of SJM 44 who from the early 1950s to 1985 acted in a semi-voluntary capacity to assist in arranging jobs and accommodation for girls leaving St Joseph’s.
- 35 The facilities in the school were further extended in August 1988 when the Training Schools Branch of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) approved a proposal submitted by SR 240 on behalf of the Board of Management of St Joseph’s for an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) to be built on the site. SR 240 explained in the proposal that the Board of Management envisaged the ICU being used as:
- “...a temporary respite for a girl or girls who may be emotionally disturbed, suicidal or need space in a confidential setting to express grief, anger etc.”<sup>20</sup>

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18 SJM 1511.

19 LSN 300-301.

20 SJM 1586.

- 36 The ICU was built alongside the Independent Training Unit and was connected to it by a corridor. It was designed to accommodate two girls at any one time and staff supervising them. It was 100% funded by the NIO and built in accordance with its blueprint. We will consider evidence about the use of the ICU later in this chapter.
- 37 In addition to the extension of physical facilities in the school, there were also increases in staffing levels from 1972 onwards, with the appointment of more lay members of staff, and the qualification profile of staff also improved. These improvements were also achieved through SR 240’s negotiations with the NIO. SR 234 told us that when she was reviewing St Joseph’s records to assist the Inquiry she found letters that SR 240 had sent to successive government departments explaining that because of the increasingly complex emotional needs and behavioural problems of girls, for example self-harming, additional staff and/or staff training were required. She confirmed that the NIO provided necessary funding in response to these requests.<sup>21</sup>
- 38 With the introduction of the Children’s Order in 1995 St Joseph’s became known as the St Joseph’s Adolescent Centre and it was reorganised to create separate units for girls subject to care and juvenile justice orders. This arrangement continued until St Joseph’s closed in 2000. The Sisters of St Louis told us that the decision was taken to close the school because of the complexities of implementing the changes required by the Children’s Order 1995 and also the age profile of the sisters managing St Joseph’s was increasing and there were no appropriately qualified sisters available to replace them.<sup>22</sup>

## Admission of girls to St Joseph’s

- 39 Approximately 1,500 girls were admitted to St Joseph’s between the years 1922 and 1995.<sup>23</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s the number of admissions varied between four and thirteen per annum. During the 1970s this number increased and by the 1980s the average number of admissions per year was twenty.<sup>24</sup> Even given this increase, the level of annual admissions to St Joseph’s was significantly lower than that experienced in many of the children’s homes we have considered.

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21 Day 186, p.66.

22 SJM 28263.

23 SJM 22715.

24 SJM 2301.

- 40 SR 234 told us that it was only occasionally that a girl was admitted directly to the school through a training school order issued by the Juvenile Court as a result of her offending behaviour. She explained that most girls were referred to St Joseph’s because their parents or the children’s homes they were placed in could not deal with their behaviour.<sup>25</sup> This is borne out by the admission statistics recorded in inspection reports. For example, at the time of the 1987 inspection of the school there were 32 girls on the roll and only one of them was described as a juvenile offender. Sixteen of these girls had come from children’s homes. At the time of the 1994 inspection there were 32 girls on the roll; 27 had been placed in the school for care, protection and control reasons and four because of non-school attendance. Eighteen of the girls had previously been resident in one of seven children’s homes located across the province.<sup>26</sup>
- 41 The majority of girls were admitted on a Place of Safety Order for a five week assessment period. The five week assessment period could be extended twice before a girl was either discharged, or a formal training school order was obtained.
- 42 SR 234 explained that some girls with very complex behavioural problems were sent to St Joseph’s as a last resort and, to assist staff with their care, psychologists from the Adolescent Psychology and Research Unit (APRU) maintained regular contact with the school and assessed and worked with these girls. Although SR 234 appreciated this assistance, she commented that if a small psychiatric unit had been available some girls might have been more appropriately assisted in it. Her memory was that there was a small adolescent psychiatric unit in Belfast but that it was always over-subscribed.<sup>27</sup>

## Regulation and Inspection of St Joseph’s

- 43 The Children Act 1908 imposed a duty on the MoHA to inspect certified reformatory and industrial schools at least once a year. Industrial schools were required to maintain a record of their use of corporal punishment and as part of the inspection process inspectors checked and signed and dated these records. The dated signatures of inspectors in the punishment records maintained by St Joseph’s show that the school was inspected at

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25 Day 185, p.6.

26 SJM 2299.

27 Day 186, pp.58 to 59.

least annually from 1922 to 1954.<sup>28</sup> The inspection reports for this period record a high level of satisfaction with the condition of the children in the school and the care they were receiving.

- 44 An early example of such an inspection was that carried out by Mr J McCloy on 13 December 1926. He reported that on the date he visited there were:

“...43 girls present namely, 40 under detention – of whom 5 were under six years of age – and three who had been admitted pending committal.”

- 45 He recorded that the children appeared to be nourished, were comfortably and neatly clothed, and apparently contented and diligent. He noted that the conduct of the children had been good and that breaches of discipline had been few and the punishments mild.<sup>29</sup> Mr McCloy continued to be impressed with the school when he inspected it during the 1930s. In the report of his inspection in 1931 he recorded:

“The school continues to be conducted with the usual excellence.”<sup>30</sup>

and in the report of his 1933 inspection he recorded:

“The children continue to be very well cared for in all respects.”<sup>31</sup>

- 46 Assistant Inspector Weir inspected the school in October 1944 and reported that the general atmosphere of the home was one which merited praise and that the staff were doing excellent work.<sup>32</sup> Miss Florence Harrison inspected the school in December 1947. She described the sister in charge and her staff as entirely devoted to the children in their care and noted the happy relations that existed between staff and pupils.<sup>33</sup> Mr Weir inspected the school again in January 1949 and commented favourably on the guidance and care the children were receiving.<sup>34</sup>

- 47 The Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950, provided for a power rather than a duty upon the MoHA (and subsequently the NIO) to inspect training schools. The annual inspections continued following the passing of that legislation. For example, Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest

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28 SJM 29276.

29 SJM 1488.

30 SJM 1444.

31 SJM 1434.

32 SJM 1379-1380.

33 SJM 1331.

34 SJM 1329.

inspected the school in November 1951 and concluded:

“The usual happy atmosphere prevailed with everyone going about their tasks cheerfully and quietly. ...The attitude of the staff to the girls shows itself too in the way they speak to them, affectionate, concerned and understanding.”<sup>35</sup>

- 48 There was evidence in contemporaneous documentation of the school responding to matters raised by inspectors, for example providing an update to the MoHA in April 1952 about the progress achieved in completion of repairs and improvements to the home identified as necessary in the report of the inspection carried out in March 1952.<sup>36</sup>
- 49 It was also apparent from contemporaneous documentation that the inspectors’ contact with the school was not limited to annual visits. For example, in 1950, Miss Forrest visited the girls during their summer holiday in Glenariff<sup>37</sup> and in November 1951 Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest visited a girl boarded out from St Joseph’s and found she was being well cared for.<sup>38</sup> In the report of the inspection completed in December 1952 there was a reference to Miss Forrest being impressed by the percussion band which she had heard on an earlier visit to the school.<sup>39</sup>
- 50 Records retained by St Joseph’s, including a visitor’s book, daily diary, minute book and punishment book, show that MoHA inspectors visited the school on an annual basis from 1955 to 1968, with the exception of 1961.<sup>40</sup> While not all of these contacts were described in the documentation as inspections, they do show that inspectors maintained regular contact with the school. We also noted that HIA 249 who was resident in the school from 1946 to 1958, HIA 178 who was resident in the school from 1949 to 1964, and HIA 203 who was resident in the school from 1964 to 1967<sup>41</sup> all referred in their evidence to inspectors visiting the school.
- 51 The DHSSPS also pointed us to references in the school’s records to contact between the school and Miss Forrest and other MoHA officials from 1971 to 1973 about plans for proposed new buildings.

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35 SJM 1300.

36 SJM 1288.

37 SJM 1302.

38 SJM 1299.

39 SJM 1281.

40 SJM 29277.

41 SJM 071, Day 184, p.83; SJM 056.

- 52 It is also clear, as we have considered above, that when the MoHA became concerned about the operation of the school and the need for an updated approach it took steps to ensure these concerns were addressed.
- 53 The frequency and format of inspections changed with the establishment of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Social Work Advisory Group (SWAG) in 1972. Dr McCoy told us in Module 7, which dealt with juvenile justice institutions, that the approach taken to inspection of training schools at that time was probably similar to that which applied to voluntary children’s homes and that visits would have been informal and infrequent and did not result in the production of detailed reports.<sup>42</sup>
- 54 A more consistent approach to the regulation and monitoring of training schools was re-established in 1975-76 when as a result of a major reorganisation in SWAG, an inspector, Wesley Donnell, was seconded to the NIO to provide professional social work advice about criminal justice matters including training schools.<sup>43</sup> Mr Donnell told us during Module 7, that as part of this role he visited training schools approximately once a month. He accepted that these visits could not be considered formal inspections but explained that they enabled him to provide professional assistance to the schools and to promote staff training.<sup>44</sup>
- 55 Sister Canice Durkan confirmed when she gave evidence in person that Mr Donnell visited St Joseph’s regularly and that some of these visits were unannounced.<sup>45</sup> Contemporaneous documentation recorded that Mr Donnell’s involvement extended to contributing to discussions about the care of individual girls. For example, the policy underpinning the operation of the ICU in St Joseph’s included a requirement that where it was envisaged a girl would be kept in the unit for more than 24 hours Mr Donnell would be immediately informed and invited to attend a multi-disciplinary meeting in relation to the placement.<sup>46</sup>
- 56 We also heard evidence in Module 7 that senior personnel from the NIO’s Training Schools Branch maintained regular contact with the training schools and met regularly with staff and representatives from the management boards to discuss policy and administrative matters. We

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42 SPT 2000.

43 SPT 3004.

44 SPT 3005.

45 Day 187, p.149.

46 SJM 3530.

accept that officials maintained regular contact with St Joseph’s and that the regular visits by Mr Donnell from 1976 onwards would have enabled significant problems in the operation of the school and the care provided to the girls to be identified and addressed. However, a more regular programme of formal inspections did not commence until 1987.

- 57 **We considered the lack of formal inspections in the period from 1968 to 1987 was a systemic failing by the MoHA, and then the NIO, to ensure that St Joseph’s was providing proper care and meeting statutory requirements about the operation of training schools.**

### Regulation of St Joseph’s from 1987 onwards

- 58 The more regular programme of formal inspections of St Joseph’s which commenced in 1987 was undertaken on behalf of the NIO by the DHSS’s newly formed Social Services Inspectorate (SSI). The programme consisted of in-depth general inspections, which were undertaken in 1987 and 1993 and involved three inspectors spending a number of days in the school, and regulatory inspections, which were completed in 1992 and 1994 and involved one inspector reporting on how the school was meeting specific aspects of the Training School Rules. The SSI produced detailed reports of these inspections which provided us with helpful information about how the school operated from 1987 to 1995 and the inspectors’ assessments of the quality of the care being provided to the girls during that period.
- 59 The first general inspection of the school was undertaken by the SSI in May 1987. Three inspectors spent a total of 101 hours inspecting the school.<sup>47</sup> The inspectors were positive about the standard of care the girls were receiving and recorded that it emerged through conversations with the girls that they had a high regard for staff, were generally content with the treatment they received in the school and had no complaints.<sup>48</sup>
- 60 The inspectors spent time in the school at all times of the day and at the weekends and the report of their inspection provided helpful detail about the daily living regime in the school. They described how the girls were woken around 8.15am on weekdays and were expected to wash, have breakfast and complete some chores before attending Assembly in the school at 9.30am. School continued until 4.00pm with a fifteen minute break in the morning and a lunch hour. After school, optional evening

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47 SJM 1495.

48 SJM 22748.

activities were organised and an evening meal and supper were provided. The girls were free to associate with each other and bed-time was around 10.00pm. The inspectors observed that weekend days were more relaxed and unstructured with the girls being allowed to stay up late to watch television on Friday evenings and have a lie-in on Saturday mornings. They recorded that some girls were allowed home for the weekend and that those who remained undertook cleaning chores on Saturday morning and then had leisure activities including organised outings for the rest of the time.<sup>49</sup>

- 61 Staff were seen to be striving to maintain a facilitating ethos in House 1 by creating an environment of warmth, openness, trust and acceptance.<sup>50</sup> Nurturing of girls and the setting of limits was observed within the three long-stay houses.<sup>51</sup>
- 62 The inspectors noted that some girls because of their prior experiences could be volatile and that emotional outbursts could lead to physical confrontations, but that these were handled calmly by the staff. In general the inspectors found the environment and daily life in St Joseph’s to be child-centred and commented that the staff were always available, supportive and involved in the lives of the girls.<sup>52</sup> They found that the concepts set out in the school’s philosophy document about the provision of openness, warmth, acceptance, a non-judgemental attitude and movement at the girl’s pace, were all evident in practice. The relationship between staff and girls was described as honest, trusting and supportive, and controlling as and when necessary.<sup>53</sup>
- 63 The inspectors detailed the staffing which comprised of a director, an assistant director, deputy assistant director, senior assistant, five senior residential social workers, nineteen residential social workers, one senior field social worker and one part time nurse/residential social worker. Care staff worked a 39-hour week under a split shift rota and a member of staff slept in each house unit at night. The inspectors recorded that in addition to care staff there were four teachers, administrative officers, a cook, a caretaker, a swimming pool attendant and a part-time domestic member of staff and that the services of a local medical officer and nurse were available to the school.

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49 SJM 22760.  
50 SJM 22764.  
51 SJM 22765.  
52 SJM 22761.  
53 SJM 22773.



- 64 The inspectors noted the very low turnover of staff, the willingness of staff to be flexible about covering shifts and in particular the availability of the nuns who worked in the school. However, having regard to recommended staffing levels set out in Castle Priory guidelines, inspectors concluded that in order to maintain an acceptable level of staffing during the working day the appointment of two further residential social workers was required.<sup>54</sup>
- 65 By the time of the 1992 regulatory inspection there were 31 care staff,<sup>55</sup> an increase of one member of staff from 1987, and they were caring on the day of the inspection for 31 girls.<sup>56</sup> At the time of the general inspection in 1993 there were 33 care staff in total<sup>57</sup> and on the day of the census that took place that year there were 31 girls on the roll, two of whom by prior agreement were residing in their family homes. In the report of the 1994 regulatory inspection the inspector commented positively on the level of qualification of staff and the continuing staff development and training provided to them.<sup>58</sup>
- 66 This investment in staffing was accompanied by continued investment by the NIO in the maintenance and improvement of the fabric of the school. The inspectors who undertook the 1987 general inspection noted that there were excellent recreation facilities available for the girls including a swimming pool, a games hall equipped for gymnastics and a stage suitable for staging plays and concerts.<sup>59</sup> The inspectors who undertook the 1993 general inspection commented on the extension of the facilities available in the school including, for example, the provision of a fully equipped hairdressing salon for training purposes. The DoJ confirmed in its closing submission that:
- “St Joseph’s was regarded as generously staffed, resourced and equipped.”<sup>60</sup>
- 67 The inspectors identified in 1987 that while the Training School Rules specified that Boards of Management should meet as far as practical once a month that the St Joseph’s Board of Management was usually meeting quarterly. By the time of the December 1994 inspection this continued to be the case and the inspector recommended that consent was sought

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54 SJM 22755.  
55 SJM 2300.  
56 SJM 2269.  
57 SJM 2267.  
58 SJM 22751.  
59 SJM 22758.  
60 SJM 30063..

from the NIO for the Board of Management to meet quarterly rather than at monthly intervals as specified in the Training School Rules (1952).<sup>61</sup> This indicated that although inspectors were satisfied that quarterly meetings of the Board of Management were sufficient they were appropriately seeking to ensure that this departure from the Training School Rules was formally approved. We also saw follow-up correspondence between the NIO and the school in relation to this and other recommendations made by inspectors.

- 68 Also, although inspectors were satisfied in 1987 that the duty of monthly visiting by board members was being fulfilled they recommended that brief reports of visits commenting upon the general conditions, matters of interest and concern including any complaints should be tabled at each meeting of the Board of Management. During the 1994 inspection, inspectors noted that these reports were being provided and were able to identify from them that visits were not being undertaken monthly. They recommended that care should be taken to ensure that visits did take place monthly and that board members should spend sufficient time talking to the girls and making other enquiries to satisfy themselves regarding their care and the state of the school.<sup>62</sup>
- 69 Inspectors also sought the views of girls directly as part of inspections. Mr Donnell, who conducted the regulatory inspection in 1992, reported that the girls were aware of the purpose of his visit and their right to speak to him privately but none chose to and no matters or complaints were brought to his attention.<sup>63</sup> In advance of the 1993 general inspection each girl was sent a confidential questionnaire to complete and post back to the inspectors. The inspectors reported that although one girl commented on how far St Joseph’s was from her family home and others said they would like more cigarettes, locks on bedroom doors and more freedom to go out at night in general the feedback was positive. They reported that the girls stated they felt fairly treated and knew they could talk to staff, and in particular, senior staff, if they had a worry or concern.<sup>64</sup>
- 70 Questionnaires were also sent to the parents or guardians of the girls and 50% of them were returned. All of those who responded said they were made to feel welcome when they visited the school and could speak to

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61 SJM 22828.

62 SJM 22819.

63 SJM 2156-2157.

64 SJM 2270.

their child in private.<sup>65</sup> Also 85% of the returned questionnaires contained complimentary remarks about the staff, the friendly atmosphere that prevailed in the school and how their daughters were being well cared for and benefitting from being in the school.<sup>66</sup> One parent indicated that they had registered a complaint about the school with the RUC but when the inspectors wrote to the address given for this parent to seek more information the letter was returned marked “not at this address”, although the inspectors recorded that it had been indicated to them that the parent still resided at the address the letter had been sent to.<sup>67</sup>

- 71 Inspectors identified a number of features that contributed to the effective provision of care in the school including that operational policies were straightforward, unambiguous and understood by all and that all staff had a sound knowledge of the girls and a consistent approach underlined the provision of care.<sup>68</sup> They found that discipline was maintained within a policy of balanced reward and sanction related to behaviour and concluded:
- “The main controls are the vigilance of staff and the consistency of staff team responses to each girl and her needs.”<sup>69</sup>
- 72 In general, the recommendations that the inspectors made related to the development of the school, for example the possibility of employing male staff, and administrative matters such as improving the general order of the files. The inspectors’ recommendations about matters relating to the direct care of the girls were few and covered such issues as increasing the amount of money available for birthday gifts for the girls, introducing incentives to encourage non-smoking<sup>70</sup> and maintaining a punishment book, even though corporal punishment was no longer applied, to record the sanctions imposed on girls.<sup>71</sup>
- 73 We will now consider the complaints we received about St Joseph’s, under the headings: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; neglect, and unacceptable practices.

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65 SJM 2278  
66 SJM 2279  
67 SJM 2279  
68 SJM 2262  
69 SJM 2262  
70 SJM 22795.  
71 SJM 2309.

## Physical Abuse

- 74 HIA 249 was admitted to St Joseph’s in 1947 aged almost five years with her two older sisters and one younger sister; she remained in the orphanage and then the training school until 1958.
- 75 SR 235 responded to HIA 249’s evidence on behalf of the congregation. SR 235 spent three periods in St Joseph’s, the first of which was from August 1958 to October 1959. HIA 249 was discharged from the school in April 1958 so SR 235 and HIA 249 were not in the school at the same time. However, SR 235 is the only living member of the congregation that worked in St Joseph’s in the 1950s and for that reason she responded to HIA 249’s evidence.
- 76 HIA 249 told us that SR 248 who was the Director when she was admitted was a good nun but that other nuns SR 237, SR 249, SR 250 and SR 252 hit her and her sisters with long thin bamboo canes called “sally rods”. She described how this caning hurt her and left red marks on her skin. She also described SR 252 hitting her across her knuckles with a ruler. HIA 249 told us that she did not think SR 248 knew how the other nuns were treating her.<sup>72</sup>
- 77 She said that SR 237 was particularly harsh<sup>73</sup> and described how when she was around nine years of age she and other girls were frightened by the sound of an explosion at the nearby Middletown barracks and further alarmed when an older girl told them “there is somebody coming for us” and began to pray to the devil. She told us that SR 237 responded to their distress by beating them and making them kneel on the stairs all night as a punishment.<sup>74</sup> SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and said that although SR 237 was strict she did not think she would have made a child kneel all night but accepted that if it did happen then it was inappropriate and harsh.<sup>75</sup>
- 78 HIA 249 told us that girls were not allowed to talk at meal times and would be caned with a “sally rod” if they were caught talking.<sup>76</sup> SR 235 did not remember children being forbidden from speaking at meal times and being punished for doing so, but stated that if that was the case she

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72 SJM 068

73 SJM 069.

74 SJM 070.

75 SJM 22923.

76 SJM 069.

apologised on behalf of the congregation for the implementation of such a harsh regime.

- 79 HIA 249 described an occasion where she and other girls were beaten for eating food intended for the nuns but in connection to that incident she also referred to a marks system that was in use at that time:

“We didn’t get stars/marks for good behaviour for a while after that.”<sup>77</sup>

- 80 HIA 249 recalled that she started menstruating when she was around thirteen years and was frightened because she was unprepared and thought she was dying. She described SR 237’s reaction when she caught her washing her stained sheets and mistakenly concluded that she had wet her bed:

“She took me upstairs to my dormitory bent me over my wire bed and beat me on my bare back and bottom with a long narrow stick. She beat me until she was tired and it was the worst beating I ever had the whole time I was there.”<sup>78</sup>

- 81 HIA 249 said that after this beating SR 237 gave her sanitary towels but did not explain puberty to her. She said she was so upset after the beating she ran away but as she did not know her way home she had to return to the school where she was beaten again.<sup>79</sup>

- 82 SR 235 responded to this allegation and explained that there was no entry in the punishment book of HIA 249 being punished in 1955, the year she was thirteen, and no record of her running away. SR 235 said she would totally condemn the physical punishment described by HIA 249 but pointed out that lack of discussion about puberty mirrored what would have happened in families at that time.<sup>80</sup>

- 83 HIA 249 also described SR 237 beating her with a stick for speaking back to the Reverend Mother and making her stand in school against a wall with her hands held up for the whole school day as a further punishment for the same infringement.<sup>81</sup> SR 235 told us there was no record of HIA 249 being punished in this way. She explained that there were eight entries in the punishment book about HIA 249 in the years between 1947 and 1954 but that only two of the punishments recorded took the form of a

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77 SJM 071.

78 SJM 069.

79 SJM 070.

80 SJM 22007.

81 SJM 069.

slap and the others involved HIA 249 being deprived of treats such as sweets.<sup>82</sup>

84 When SR 235 worked in St Joseph’s in 1958 to 1959 SR 237 was in charge. She explained that SR 237 had a reserved manner and was seen as strict:

“She had a bunch of keys that hung on a short chain from her waistline and you’d hear the keys when she would be coming along. So people would straighten up and behave.”<sup>83</sup>

85 SR 235 could not respond directly to HIA 249’s allegations about SR 237’s behaviour towards her except to say that if she behaved in the way described she would totally condemn her actions and apologise for them.<sup>84</sup> She explained that corporal punishment was permissible in the 1950s and she was aware it was administered in the school from overhearing girls discuss it but she never observed it being applied. She confirmed that SR 237 had a thin bamboo rod but she did not remember her carrying it around with her and thought she kept it in her office. However, she told us that she never saw SR 237 strike a girl.<sup>85</sup>

86 HIA 249 told us that her younger sister SJM 27 was regularly beaten because of her closeness to SR 248 by four nuns: SR 249, SR 250, SR 251 and SR 252. SR 235 explained that the congregation was not able to identify any sister called SR 251 and that the other three sisters were dead. She explained that beatings as described were not recorded in the punishment book but if they were administered and not recorded, that should not have happened and she apologised if it did.

87 SR 235 told us that there were entries in the punishment book that record SJM 27 being punished twelve times in the seven years from 1953 to 1960, but that the recorded punishments were at most two slaps and on five of the twelve occasions the punishment was deprivation of sweets or fruit.<sup>86</sup> SR 235 also pointed out that on occasion these punishments were applied by SR 245 with whom SJM 27 had a close relationship. HIA 249’s sister SJM 27 is dead and we are not aware of any complaints she made about the treatment she received in St Joseph’s.

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82 SJM 22007

83 Day 186, p.17

84 SJM 22007

85 Day 186, p.16

86 SJM 22004.

- 88 HIA 178 was placed in St Joseph’s on 23 March 1949, aged 1 year and 2 months when the home was operating as an orphanage. She remained in the school until spring 1964. Entries in the punishment book show that from the age of five years until the age of ten years HIA 178 received punishments on eleven occasions. On four of these occasions the recorded punishments are one or two slaps while on the other seven occasions the recorded punishments are deprivation of sweets or fruit. The reasons given for punishments included being “disobedient and bold” and “troublesome”. Five of the punishments were administered by SR 248 and the remaining six were administered by SR 237 when she took over as director of the school.
- 89 HIA 178 did not recall being punished by SR 248 who she remembered as a gentle, kind person. However, she told us that she experienced “a lot of physical and emotional abuse” from SR 237. She stated:
- “She was such a wicked woman. She hated me for some reason and blamed me if anything happened or even just for simple things like laughing. She beat me with a long narrow bamboo stick or slapped me almost every day.”<sup>87</sup>
- 90 HIA 178 told us that she lived in fear of SR 237 and felt that SR 237 picked on her because she had a physical disability which meant she could not use her right hand. She described an occasion when SR 237 wrongly accused her of smoking and took her upstairs, stripped her of her clothes, bent her over an iron bed and hit her with a bamboo cane while another nun, who she thought was SR 254, held her arms. HIA 178 told us that SR 237 caned her back and legs and when she finished said to her “Go and show those stripes to whoever you like.”<sup>88</sup> HIA 178 recalled that SR 237 may have felt guilty afterwards because she offered her some sweets which HIA 178 refused to accept.
- 91 SR 237 is dead but SR 254 provided a statement in which she confirmed that she worked in St Joseph’s for two years from 1960 to 1962 but explained that she was part of the housekeeping staff and was not involved in the care or disciplining of the girls. She told us that she had no recollection of HIA 178 and that she did not witness or assist others to beat any child with a stick.<sup>89</sup>

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87 SJM 333.

88 SJM 334.

89 SJM 29257

- 92 As referred to above, HIA 249 told us that SR 237 made her and other girls kneel all night as a punishment and HIA 178 also told us that SR 237 punished her in this way. She said that she and another girl had been playing around at bedtime and as a punishment for making noise she was made to kneel in the middle of the bedroom floor all night. She commented “we weren’t even allowed to be children.”<sup>90</sup> When HIA 178 gave evidence in person she was told that the congregation found it hard to believe that SR 237 had behaved in that manner, but she insisted that she was punished in the way she described.<sup>91</sup>
- 93 HIA 178 could recall only one occasion when a nun intervened to protect her from SR 237. She said that SR 256 who taught in the school saw SR 237 pushing her to hurry her down stairs and that she intervened and told SR 237 she was going to complain to the Reverend Mother about her behaviour. HIA 178 said that SR 237 stopped pushing her on that occasion but continued to abuse her when no one was around.<sup>92</sup> HIA 178 told us that she talked to no one in the school about how SR 237 was treating her because she felt it must have been obvious to everyone.
- 94 To support this view, she told us that in 2006-7 she met a nun SR 242 who worked in St Joseph’s when she was resident in the school. She said that she asked SR 242 where SR 237 was living as she wanted to confront her about how she had treated her. She said that SR 242 put her arms round her to comfort her and said “Didn’t she give you terrible beatings? Sure I never done that.”<sup>93</sup> The congregation responded to this account and said that the meeting HIA 178 described having with SR 242 could not have happened in 2006 as SR 242 was dead by then, but they did confirm that SR 242 worked in the infirmary in St Joseph’s when HIA 178 was resident in the school.
- 95 HIA 178 explained that she had no one external to tell about the abuse and commented that even if she had, she did not think they would have believed her because people were inclined to trust the sisters.<sup>94</sup>
- 96 We are aware from material provided by the police that another girl who was resident in the school in the 1950s complained about the treatment she received from SR 237. SJM 59 was in St Joseph’s from 1954 when

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90 SJM 333

91 Day 184, p.75

92 SJM 334

93 SJM 335.

94 SJM 335.



she was aged nine years until 1961 when she was aged sixteen years. SJM 59 made a statement to the police in 2004 that she was force-fed by SR 237 and physically abused and denigrated by her, and by SR 239.<sup>95</sup> The police did not pursue the complaint since SR 237 was dead and SR 239 had left the congregation.

- 97 Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest of the MoHA checked the punishment book during their inspection of the school in December 1952 and recorded:

“The punishment book shows a very occasional record of 2 slaps or 4 slaps, but mainly punishment is by deprivation of privileges. In general the impression is one of firmness and kindness in the right proportions.”<sup>96</sup>

We understood that in this context the reference to “slap” meant being hit with a cane rather than being hit with an open hand.

- 98 We reviewed the punishment book for the 1950s and also found that recorded punishments were generally deprivation of sweets or fruit and where slaps were recorded it was usually two slaps. For example, it was recorded that in October 1955 a girl was deprived of sweets for being untidy and impertinent; in November 1955 a girl was deprived of fruit for being disobedient; in December 1955 a girl was deprived of pocket money for being quarrelsome;<sup>97</sup> and in March 1957 a girl received two slaps for sulkiness.<sup>98</sup> More unusual punishments were also recorded: in January 1957, a sixteen-year-old girl had her hair cut for absconding for a second time;<sup>99</sup> in March 1957, two girls of sixteen years were made to apologise publicly for impertinence; and, in January 1958 as a punishment for “destruction”, a girl was given one slap on the hand and made to “pay a little of the cost of the article injured.”<sup>100</sup>

- 99 These recorded punishments contrast significantly with the accounts we received of physical punishment and while we do not doubt the recorded punishments we recognise that it is possible that not all punishments or the extent of them were recorded. On the basis of the evidence we received from witnesses and our consideration of the punishment books we concluded that it is probable that spontaneous reactions to bad

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95 SJM 4087-4093.

96 SJM 1284.

97 SJM 2049

98 SJM 2045

99 SJM 2046

100 SJM 2043

behaviour were less likely to be recorded than children being referred to the director for corporal punishment.

- 100 HIA 203 was committed to St Joseph’s by Belfast juvenile court in November 1964 aged sixteen years and eight months and remained there until January 1967 when she was released on license at the age of eighteen years and eleven months. She was finally discharged in February 1967, the day before her nineteenth birthday. HIA 203 told us that ten days after she was admitted to the school she absconded with three other girls and was brought back some hours later by the police. She said that she and the other girls were taken to SR 237 for punishment and that while each girl was sent in separately to SR 237’s room the others were supervised by SR 241. HIA 203 said that while she was waiting she was “ranting and raving” that she was not going to be hit by SR 237 and that SR 241 responded by punching her in the eye. She said she was left with a black eye, which none of the nuns commented on, and that she also got caned on the behind by SR 237.<sup>101</sup>
- 101 In a form detailing the administration of corporal punishment which the school submitted to the MoHA it is recorded that HIA 203 was given six slaps on the hand for absconding.<sup>102</sup> When HIA 203 was shown this return on the day she gave evidence in person she confirmed her memory that she received six slaps on her behind rather than on her hand. The Sisters of St Louis told us that this was the only complaint it has ever received about SR 241. HIA 203 confirmed that this was the only occasion that SR 241 hit her and that she saw it as a reaction to her saying that she would not allow SR 237 to hit her.
- 102 There was another entry in the punishment book about HIA 203 receiving six slaps for being disobedient and defiant. HIA 203 did not remember this punishment but thought it might relate to her fighting with another girl. She told us that although some nuns were physically abusive, abuse did not happen all the time and that SR 237 was not always harsh with her; “in most cases she was pretty fair.”<sup>103</sup> She also told us that there were some “really great nuns” in St Joseph’s,<sup>104</sup> and particularly remembered SR 269 who taught her music as a lovely nun.<sup>105</sup>

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101 Day 184, p.23.

102 SJM 874.

103 Day 184, p.35

104 Day 184, p.29

105 Day 184, p.31

103 HIA 161 was admitted to St Joseph’s in December 1968 when she was fourteen years and discharged in March 1971 when she was almost sixteen years. She described in her written statement that when she first arrived at the school she heard a girl screaming because she was being scrubbed in a bath with a deck scrubber. SR 240 provided a response in writing to this evidence and stated that she had no recollection of nuns having to bath girls as they were all teenagers and looked after their own hygiene.<sup>106</sup> When HIA 161 gave evidence in person she clarified that she did not actually observe the girl being scrubbed but told us that on more than one occasion she heard girls being distressed at being scrubbed and that the scrubbing was intended as a punishment rather than assistance with washing. She gave the example of girls being found in bed together being punished in this way.<sup>107</sup> HIA 161 described a nun SR 238 as a “nightmare”:

“I was in her dormitory and you got slapped, beaten and punched by her regularly. There was no-one I could think of in life that I could have gone to for help, no-one who would have believed me or done anything for me.”<sup>108</sup>

104 SR 240 responded in writing to this evidence and said she was not aware of SR 238 behaving in this way and that if she had been aware of such behaviour she would have put a stop to it. She noted that HIA 161 said she felt unable to complain but pointed out that there would have been approximately eleven other girls sleeping in the dormitory and she would have expected some of them to have complained about a nun behaving in such a manner.<sup>109</sup> HIA 161 responded to this when she gave evidence in person and said that all the girls would have been scared to raise a complaint about a nun.<sup>110</sup>

105 HIA 161 remembered SR 237 and said that she “had it in” for her and her sister because they had been resident in Nazareth House before being sent to St Joseph’s and the Sisters of Nazareth had given a bad account of them to the Sisters of St Louis. When asked what she remembered about SR 237 she said:

“It was the cane, you know, and having to stand for hours and own up to something that you didn’t do. You know, you would have been called

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106 SJM 883

107 Day 184, p.144

108 SJM 010

109 SJM 884.

110 Day 184, p.148.

a liar and a liar until you actually said something and owned up to it just to get out of it, but then you would get punished anyway.”<sup>111</sup>

- 106 HIA 161 told us she ran away with another girl and got as far as Derry where she was put in contact with an up and coming MP. She said she told the MP about the abuse she had suffered in St Joseph’s and asked for her help, which she agreed to give provided HIA 161 returned to the school. HIA 161 said that when she returned to the school she was made to write out lines as a punishment for running away and speaking negatively about the nuns. Contemporaneous records maintained by the school record HIA 161 being given the task of writing out the menu because she had made “derogatory remarks about the school.”<sup>112</sup>
- 107 HIA 161 told us that although she had to return to the school she believed that it was through the MP’s intervention that she was eventually allowed to leave St Joseph’s and stay with a family in Portadown. However the Sisters of St Louis told us that since HIA 161 was almost sixteen years old preparations had already commenced for her discharge from the school.<sup>113</sup>
- 108 SJM 73 was admitted to St Joseph’s in 1970 and remained there until 1981 so she had a short period of overlap with HIA 161. She told us that she never witnessed girls being beaten or hit but that she remembered a few occasions when girls had to be restrained because they were fighting with each other.<sup>114</sup> She was clear that the nuns were authority figures but stated that they were not aggressive and would have talked through issues with girls.<sup>115</sup>
- 109 SJM 74 was in St Joseph’s from the early 1980s to 1985. She told us that she was not hit by the nuns and did not observe other girls being hit. She explained that the punishments she received for misbehaving were being told off, sent to her room, having her pocket money reduced or losing out on a cigarette. HIA 161 also recalled cigarettes being withheld as punishment for poor behaviour.
- 110 HIA 176 had four placements in St Joseph’s: January 1982 to January 1983; March 1983 to August 1983; February 1984 to May 1984; and, September to October 1984.

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111 Day 184, p.175.

112 SJM 24704.

113 SJM 885.

114 SJM 29260.

115 SJM 29261.

- 111 HIA 176’s sister HIA 376 had two placements in St Joseph’s: the first was from June 1983 to July 1984; and the second was from August 1984 to April 1985. So for two periods the sisters were resident in the school together.
- 112 When HIA 376 arrived for her first placement in St Joseph’s in June 1983 her sister HIA 176 was completing her second placement in the school. Both girls were in St Joseph’s together for a period of two months and then HIA 176 was discharged and returned home at the end of August 1983. However, she returned in February 1984 for her third stay in the school, which lasted until May 1984. So, for approximately five months of HIA 376’s first stay in St Joseph’s her sister was also resident in the school.
- 113 HIA 376 started her second placement in the school in August 1984 and her sister (HIA 176) arrived for her fourth stay in the school in September 1984 and was discharged home in October 1984. Therefore, the sisters were only resident in the school together for three weeks during HIA 376’s second stay in St Joseph’s.
- 114 Given the overlaps in their stays in the school and common themes in what they told us we will consider their evidence together. HIA 176 made a statement to the Inquiry but was unable for medical reasons to give evidence in person, her sister HIA 376 provided a statement and gave evidence in person.
- 115 HIA 176 and HIA 376 both told us that they were physically abused by a lay member of staff, SJM 4. HIA 376 told us in her statement that when she first arrived at the school SJM 4 hit her on her ear and knocked her down the corridor when she asked to see her sister HIA 176 and told her she would have it hard in the school because she was bad.<sup>116</sup> When HIA 376 gave evidence in person she clarified that this incident commenced when she and another girl went into the staff bedroom and found a pair of SJM 4’s trousers which were big enough for both girls to fit into one of the trouser legs, which they then proceeded to do. She recalled that SJM 4 came into the room while they were doing this and “backhanded her” i.e. hit her across the ear and face.<sup>117</sup>
- 116 HIA 376 told us that this was not the only occasion that SJM 4 hit her. She said she never knew when she passed SJM 4 whether she would get hit, “the backhand came so quick”, and that SJM 4 pushed and poked

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116 SJM 061.

117 Day 187, p.49.

her.<sup>118</sup> HIA 376 also said that SJM 4 hit other girls in a similar manner and that someone would get hit by SJM 4 once or twice a day.<sup>119</sup>

117 HIA 176 also described physical abuse by SJM 4:

“She would be the one who would hit you, shove you about and punish you. She was a very big woman and she flung me about a few times.”<sup>120</sup>

118 SJM 4 worked in the school from 1972 to 1988 and she provided a statement to the Inquiry in which she denied hitting HIA 376 or telling her she would have a hard time in the school because she was bad.<sup>121</sup> She also provided a statement denying that she treated HIA 176 in the way she alleged and stated that she never physically assaulted any child in her care.<sup>122</sup>

119 SR 235 responded to HIA 376’s allegations about SJM 4 on behalf of the congregation and said a member of staff striking a child in the ways described would have been totally against the school’s discipline and pastoral care policies and was totally inconsistent with how she observed SJM 4 treating girls in her care.<sup>123</sup> SR 235 also responded to HIA 176’s allegations about SJM 4 and told us that SJM 4 was a much loved member of staff and that she was particularly skilled in settling new girls.<sup>124</sup>

120 When SR 247 gave evidence she explained that SJM 4 was a “larger than life” character and that children might react to that at first but that she found SJM 4 to be a warm nurturing person who was very motherly to the girls and was loved by them.<sup>125</sup> These are the only complaints we received about SJM 4 and it does not appear that the police or the congregation received any other complaints about her physical abuse of girls.<sup>126</sup>

121 Both HIA 376 and HIA 176 made allegations against SR 240 who was the director of the school while they were resident there. SR 240 responded in writing to the statement of HIA 376 but submitted a medical certificate to explain why she would not be able give evidence in person.

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118 Day 187, p.49.

119 Day 189, p.50.

120 SJM 472.

121 SJM 15256.

122 SJM 15255.

123 SJM 927.

124 SJM 29006.

125 Day 187, p.8.

126 Day 187, p.53.

Subsequently when she was asked to respond to HIA 176’s statement, her health had deteriorated to such an extent that she provided a second medical certificate to explain why she was not in a position to provide any further statements to the Inquiry.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, she was not able to respond personally to HIA 176’s allegations but SR 235 did so on SR 240’s behalf and on behalf of the congregation.

122 HIA 376 told us SR 240 gave her “terrible beatings” and that she saw her hitting other girls:

“She carried a large bunch of keys that she used to hit us with. She would also kick me and punch me with her knuckles and fists.”<sup>128</sup>

123 HIA 376 also described a beating she said she received from SR 240 as a result of her behaviour when she was out on a trip with SR 235. She told us that SR 235 was driving her and other girls, including her sister HIA 176, to Monaghan and that during the journey SR 235 made her travel in the boot of the car as a punishment for misbehaviour. She told us the car was stopped at an Army checkpoint and the soldier who searched it asked why HIA 376 was in the boot but accepted SR 235’s explanation that HIA 376 had been speaking too much and not listening. HIA 376 said that when she returned to the school SR 240 punched and slapped her and pulled her hair as punishment for the trouble she had caused.<sup>129</sup>

124 SR 235 provided a statement to the Inquiry and gave evidence in person and categorically rejected the allegation that she “dragged” HIA 376 from a car and put her in the boot. She said in her statement:

“I find such a suggestion offensive, hurtful and quite honestly beyond belief.”<sup>130</sup>

SR 235 confirmed this response when she gave evidence in person.<sup>131</sup>

125 When HIA 376 gave evidence in person, SR 235’s denial was put to her but she insisted that the incident happened:

“It did happen. I still get flashbacks of it. It did happen.”<sup>132</sup>

126 We received no other complaints of physical abuse by SR 235. The congregation pointed out that although HIA 376 said her sister HIA 176

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127 Day 187, pp.118 to 119.

128 SJM 61–SJM 62.

129 SJM 63-64.

130 SJM 940.

131 Day 186, pp.27 to 28.

132 Day 187, p.86.

was in the car when this incident was said to have happened HIA 176 made no reference to it in the statement she provided to the Inquiry.<sup>133</sup>

127 HIA 376 also told us that SR 240 beat her when her sister HIA 176 became pregnant, because as the older sister she should have prevented her sister becoming pregnant.<sup>134</sup> The Congregation pointed out in response to this evidence that HIA 176 stayed in St Joseph’s for a short time after she became pregnant because her parents had reacted very negatively to her pregnancy and that she subsequently paid an overnight visit to the school with her baby. The congregation also pointed out that HIA 376 accompanied her sister and niece on that visit and during it confided to staff that she was three-months pregnant.<sup>135</sup>

128 When Counsel to the Inquiry asked HIA 376 why she returned willingly to somewhere she says she was so badly treated she explained that she suffered abuse at home before and after her stays in St Joseph’s and that at least in St Joseph’s:

“...we were getting fed. We had a roof over our head. We were warm, we had hot water you know.”<sup>136</sup>

129 SR 240 provided a statement in response to HIA 376’s allegations, in which she absolutely denied hitting HIA 376. She explained her philosophy of care while in charge of St Joseph’s:

“...because abuse is one of the main experiences these girls had in life before they came to us, any form of physical abuse was not only wrong, but it was totally contrary and counter-productive to what we were trying to achieve.”

130 She explained that her main aim was to:

“...try and help the girls to grow and to learn to take responsibility and discover what they were good at through positive education, positive role models and positive care from staff at St Joseph’s in their daily lives.”<sup>137</sup>

131 She pointed out that that there is no record of HIA 376 complaining about how she was treated when she was at the school and that a review of the diary entries made about HIA 376 are not consistent with her being unhappy in the school.<sup>138</sup>

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133 Day 187, p.123.

134 Day 187, pp.97 to 98.

135 SJM 987.

136 Day 187, p.100.

137 SJM 921.

138 SJM 921 -922.



- 132 HIA 176 also told us that SR 240 carried a large bunch of keys and that she would come up behind her and dig her knuckle in her back and ask her if she was behaving herself.<sup>139</sup> She described an incident where girls stole altar wine while attending a retreat in Armagh and SR 240 lined up all the girls from St Joseph’s who were attending the retreat and threatened to beat them all if the girls who stole the wine did not own up. She stated that when the girls who stole the wine owned up they got a “terrible beating”.<sup>140</sup>
- 133 HIA 176 also described SR 240 taking a girl, SJM 54, from a classroom to her office because the girl had stolen glue to sniff. HIA 176 told us that SR 240’s office was visible from the classroom and that she saw SR 240 slap SJM 54 with her hands and heard SJM 54 screaming.<sup>141</sup>
- 134 SR 235 responding on behalf of SR 240 emphasised that she was very caring in her approach to the girls in the school and that there were no records about the alleged incident of the altar wine being stolen or SJM 54 been punished for stealing glue.<sup>142</sup>
- 135 SR 235 pointed out that contemporaneous records indicate that HIA 176 was well cared for and supported in St Joseph’s. SJM 56, who was HIA 176’s social worker when she was at school, provided a statement to the Inquiry in which he supported this view. He told us that he maintained regular contact with HIA 176 and received letters from her in which she made no mention of feeling threatened or compromised in St Joseph’s and that he reviewed relevant files and found no reference to her expressing any such feelings.<sup>143</sup>
- 136 He explained that he considered that the staff in St Joseph’s were supportive of HIA 176 and created a degree of stability which enabled her to be more reflective and realistic about her family relations.<sup>144</sup>
- 137 SR 234 also gave evidence in support of SR 240 and told us that she was a very good leader and a remarkable person. She described the impression she gained after attending her first staff meeting in the school as “this place really is run for the children.”<sup>145</sup> She told us that she occasionally heard SR 240 raise her voice and that there was no doubt she was the boss but that she loved the children and they loved her.<sup>146</sup>

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139 SJM 474-475.  
140 SJM 475.  
141 SJM 475.  
142 SJM 29010.  
143 SJM 29312.  
144 SJM 29312.  
145 Day 186, p.43.  
146 Day 186, p.56.

- 138 SR 247 told us SR 240 was highly respected by the girls and the staff<sup>147</sup> and described how she would work hard to give the girls a good Christmas so as to create good memories for them.<sup>148</sup> She also described SR 240 as:
- “...great one for children getting something to eat when they returned from absconding.”<sup>149</sup>
- 139 In relation to administration of punishment by SR 240, we noted the evidence of SJM 75 who was in St Joseph’s from 1994 to 1996 and who ran away on a number of occasions with other girls and was brought back by the police. She said that on her return SR 240 would give off to her and she would lose marks and be deprived of a cigarette but that would be the extent of her punishment.<sup>150</sup>
- 140 The Inquiry has received no other complaint about SR 240’s behaviour in St Joseph’s and is not aware of any other complaint being made about her to another relevant body, e.g. the police.<sup>151</sup>
- 141 HIA 376 complained about the behaviour of other nuns. She told us that SR 243 would wear white gloves to inspect the dormitory in House 2 after the girls had cleaned it and if she found dust she would “wreck it (the dormitory) beat us and make us do it again.”<sup>152</sup> The congregation pointed out that SR 243 worked in House 1, not House 2, and Counsel to the Inquiry pointed out to HIA 376 that her sister had described another nun, SR 258, wearing a white glove to check for dust. However, HIA 376 was adamant that it was SR 243 that had behaved in the way she described.
- 142 HIA 376 also told us that on one occasion when SR 243 was driving girls to Dundalk she stopped the minibus because girls were misbehaving and “dragged” one girl SJM 19 out of the bus by her hair and beat her although she had not been involved in the misbehaviour.<sup>153</sup> SJM 19 did not apply to the Inquiry and as far as the Inquiry is aware has not made any complaint to any other body about how she was treated in St Joseph’s.
- 143 The Inquiry received no other complaints about SR 243. SR 243 is dead and SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation to the evidence

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147 Day 187, p.24.

148 Day 187, pp.9 to 11.

149 Day 187, p.5.

150 SJM 29271.

151 Day 187, p.69.

152 SJM 062.

153 SJM 065.

against her. SR 235 stated that SR 243 was the fairest and most just person she knew and she could not believe any allegation that she had beaten a girl.<sup>154</sup>

144 HIA 376 told us that SR 275 pulled her by the ear and slapped her if she did not clean the sink properly and this left her with a dislike of anyone touching her ears and an obsession about ensuring that her sinks are clean.<sup>155</sup> HIA 176 also made allegations against SR 275 who she said “dished out beatings in House 2.” She said that she saw SR 275 beat a girl, SJM 50.

145 SR 275 is dead, so SR 235 responded to these allegations about her on behalf of the congregation. She explained that SJM 50 was only resident in House 1 for three weeks in 1982 and that SR 275 did not work in that house at that time. SR 235 also told us in response to the allegations from both sisters about SR 275 that from her personal experience of working alongside her she did not believe she would hit any child.<sup>156</sup>

146 HIA 176 alleged that another nun, SR 260, broke a brush over the back of a girl, SJM 52, because she had been told that SJM 52 and other girls had been misbehaving the night before. SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and told us that they have no record of any such incident and that from her personal knowledge of SR 260 she would find it hard to believe that such an incident took place.<sup>157</sup> As far as the Inquiry is aware, this is the only complaint made about SR 260 and we noted that SJM 52 did not apply to give evidence to the Inquiry about how she was treated in St Joseph’s.

147 HIA 376 told us that SJM 1, a lay member of staff beat her and had favourites. She said SJM 1 would slap her and other girls but would also give them chores as a punishment or deprive them of tea or cigarettes.<sup>158</sup> We were not able to trace SJM 1 and this is the only complaint against her. We noted from contemporaneous records that HIA 376 complained to SJM 1 about two girls verbally abusing her and SJM 1 brought the three girls together and settled the matter to their mutual satisfaction.<sup>159</sup>

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154 SJM 935.

155 SJM 062.

156 SJM 29011

157 SJM 29010

158 Day 187, p.88

159 SJM 25959

- 148 When HIA 376 gave evidence in person she said she realised that she was headstrong when she was in St Joseph’s and that her behaviour would have been difficult to deal with but that she did not deserve all the beatings she received there.<sup>160</sup>
- 149 HIA 198 spent two periods in St Joseph’s. She was almost twelve years of age when she was first admitted for assessment on 5 May 1992. This admission was considered necessary because HIA 198 was engaging in self-harm and taking overdoses and was therefore considered to be a risk to herself. HIA 198 was discharged home on 5 June 1992 but subsequently had two separate overnight stays in St Joseph’s in response to her behaviour in the children’s home in which she had been placed. She was then admitted to the school for a second time on 22 August 1994 and remained there until 3 November 1994.
- 150 When she gave evidence in person HIA 198 told us that she believed that the inadequate response by residential and field social workers to her disclosures about being sexually abused and the lack of specialist treatment to assist her to deal with that abuse led to the downward spiral in her behaviour that resulted in her being admitted to St Joseph’s.<sup>161</sup> The HSCB pointed out in its closing submission that the contemporaneous documentation shows that significant efforts were made to keep HIA 198 within her family, to secure appropriate placements for her when that proved not to be possible and to provide ongoing support to her and her family. They also emphasised that the placement in St Joseph’s was necessary because HIA 198 was putting her life at significant risk.<sup>162</sup>
- 151 HIA 198 remembered the marks system that was used in St Joseph’s to encourage good behaviour and we saw a note she wrote on 4 June 1992, during her assessment period, in which she referred to losing points for the use of bad language.<sup>163</sup>
- 152 She also remembered cigarettes being withheld for poor behaviour<sup>164</sup> and being given to reward good behaviour, including helping nuns to find girls who had absconded.<sup>165</sup> SR 234 responded to this evidence on behalf of the congregation and told us that cigarettes were not used as a

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160 Day 187, p.87.

161 Day 185, p.5.

162 SJM 30099.

163 SJM 195.

164 Day 185, p.10.

165 Day 185, p.16.

bargaining tool or as a reward or treat by staff if a girl who had run away was subsequently returned.<sup>166</sup>

- 153 SR 235 explained that the reward system was based on each girl receiving 100 marks on a Saturday evening. Then during the week if their behaviour was not appropriate they lost marks but they could also earn additional marks for good behaviour, which were known as “plusses”. Each Saturday afternoon each girl was told how many marks she had achieved and marks were also generally allocated to each House. SR 235 explained that if a girl gained “plusses” she would be given extra pocket money but if she had lost marks she would have her pocket money reduced. She confirmed that girls purchased cigarettes with their pocket money.<sup>167</sup>
- 154 HIA 198 told us that on one occasion when she absconded she was in a nearby field and was caught by SR 247 who slapped her across her face.<sup>168</sup> SR 247 provided a statement and gave evidence in person. She denied that she slapped HIA 198 or hit any child at any stage in her life,<sup>169</sup> and said she never saw any other member of staff in St Joseph’s strike or humiliate a girl.<sup>170</sup> She told us that her only memory of HIA 198 was that on one occasion she collected her from Craigavon hospital and HIA 198 asked her to keep money safe for her.<sup>171</sup> She explained that on occasion she did find girls who had absconded in the fields surrounding the school and that she would walk and talk with them and usually be able to persuade them to return to the school.<sup>172</sup>
- 155 When HIA 198 gave evidence in person she was told that SR 247 denied slapping her. HIA 198 insisted that SR 247 had slapped her across the face.<sup>173</sup> This is the only complaint we received about SR 247 and the Sisters of St Louis confirmed they have not received any other complaint about her.<sup>174</sup>
- 156 Given the civil unrest in the province at the time and St Joseph’s’ location close to the border with the Republic of Ireland it is not surprising that the nuns were concerned about the safety of girls who absconded. SR 234

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166 SJM 163.

167 SJM 216.

168 SJM 034.

169 Day 187, p.16.

170 Day 187, p.11.

171 Day 187, p.15.

172 Day 187, p.14.

173 Day 185, p.14.

174 Day 185, p.16.

described how SR 240 had to liaise with the Army to ask them to stop carrying out patrols in the grounds of the school and how on one occasion the school was caught in the middle of a gun battle between the Army and the IRA.<sup>175</sup>

157 HIA 198 told us in her written statement that she was aware of rumours in St Joseph’s that SR 240 slapped girls. However, she confirmed when she gave evidence in person that although she observed SR 240 “roaring and shouting” she was never hit by her and she never saw her physically abusing any girls.<sup>176</sup>

158 SJM 75 was in St Joseph’s from 1994 to 1996. She told us that she did not get hit or beaten by staff in St Joseph’s and did not witness other girls being treated in that way:

“I never witnessed the Sisters slapping, beating or hitting any of the girls.”<sup>177</sup>

159 We are satisfied from the evidence we have heard that SR 237 chastised girls at times in a manner that was not formal or controlled and which was not a reasonable response to the girls’ behaviour. We consider SR 237’s behaviour in this regard was a particularly significant failing because of her position as director of the school and the authority and influence that role gave her. We are also satisfied, that given the descriptions of SR 237’s chastisements of girls, that not all the punishments she applied, or the extent of them, were fully and/or accurately recorded in the punishment book.

160 We recognised that during the time SR 237 was the director of St Joseph’s the physical chastisement of children was more common and accepted by society in general. However, we consider it significant that SR 237’s approach, which we consider extended to physical abuse of girls, contrasted sharply with that of her predecessor SR 248 and that of her successor SR 240. We received consistent accounts of SR 237 being regularly physically abusive to girls and making them kneel as a punishment. We considered this behaviour was particularly damaging because of the influence and authority she held in her position as director of the school. That position meant that girls could not appeal to a more senior member of staff about SR 237’s behaviour; it also meant she provided a poor example to her

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175 Day 186, p.60.

176 Day 185, p.21.

177 SJM 29271.

staff about how children should be treated. **Therefore, we found SR 237’s behaviour amounted to systemic physical abuse during her period of directorship between 1957 and 1971.**

- 161 We also considered whether the fact that SR 237 could behave as she did suggested a lack of oversight by the Reverend Mother of the Middletown convent to whom she would have been accountable. However, we noted from HIA 178’s account that SR 237 stopped pushing her when another nun threatened to report her to the Reverend Mother, which indicated to us that she was concerned to ensure that her behaviour did not come to the attention of her superior.
- 162 We also concluded from the evidence we have heard that there were a small number of times when some staff physically chastised girls on the spur of the moment in response to particularly disruptive or provocative behaviour. However, we consider this behaviour was one-off in nature as opposed to systemic and has to be considered within the context of the small number of allegations we received about physical abuse in the school and the evidence from witnesses who told us that while they were physically abused by staff in other institutions they were well treated in St Joseph’s. We also noted that according to HIA 249’s evidence, which we referred to above, as far back as the 1950s a stars/marks system was used as a means of promoting good behaviour and presumably to reduce the need to punish poor behaviour.<sup>178</sup>
- 163 We consider that the departure of SR 237, the appointment of SR 240 as the director and the increase in professionally qualified staff resulted in a more benign and child-centred regime that was focused on recognising the needs of the girls and understanding their behaviour in order to support them to manage themselves and their relationships better.

## Visiting Priests

- 164 We received evidence from four witnesses, (HIA 249, HIA 176, HIA 178 and HIA 376) about priests slapping girls in St Joseph’s. HIA 249 described a priest, SJM 28, slapping her across the face when she approached to take Communion. The Sisters of St Louis confirmed that SJM 28 said Mass at the school but pointed out that it was a public Mass and he would have been observed if he had hit HIA 249 in the way she described.<sup>179</sup> SJM 28

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178 SJM 071.

179 SJM 22006.

is dead. We received no other complaints about him and are not aware of any complaints being made about him to any other body.

- 165 HIA 178 told us that a priest who visited the school occasionally, who she named as SJM 36, hit her on the head for no apparent reason. Counsel to the Inquiry asked HIA 178 if she might be mistaken about the name as there was no record of a priest of that name visiting St Joseph’s but she confirmed that was the name she remembered.<sup>180</sup>
- 166 HIA 376 told us she was slapped by a visiting priest for dressing inappropriately. She said in her written statement that this occurred during Mass but accepted when giving evidence in person that it was probably during morning assembly. The Sisters of St. Louis pointed out that a priest hitting a girl in the way described would have been observed and when this was put to HIA 376 when she gave evidence in person she stated that nuns were present when it happened.<sup>181</sup> SR 235 told us on behalf of the congregation that it has no record of any such incident happening or of HIA 376 complaining about such an incident.<sup>182</sup>
- 167 HIA 376’s sister, HIA 176, told us that a priest called SJM 49 struck a girl called SJM 50 across the face when she came to receive Communion wearing bright red lipstick.<sup>183</sup> The Sisters of St Louis pointed out that SJM 50 gave evidence to the Inquiry about a children’s home that she was resident in but made no complaints about her time in St Joseph’s.<sup>184</sup>
- 168 It is noteworthy that three witnesses each described being slapped by a different priest at public Masses or assemblies in St Joseph’s and in addition one witness described another girl being slapped by a priest in a similar manner. The Sisters of St Louis told us that they have no memory of or records of such incidents or complaints being made about them. While such incidents could have occurred we do not consider the evidence sufficient to amount to a finding of systemic abuse.

## Peer Abuse

- 169 HIA 249 described two older girls bullying her and making fun of her body but confirmed that she did not report this behaviour to the nuns for

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180 Day 184, p.86.

181 Day 187, p.56.

182 SJM 930.

183 SJM 474.

184 SJM 30114.



fear that the nuns would respond by beating her.<sup>185</sup> HIA 161 said she experienced bullying in St Joseph’s<sup>186</sup> and that a hospital admission she had for three days in April 1969, which was recorded in St Joseph’s diary but with no reason given for the admission, was a result of being beaten up by another girl and having her nose broken.<sup>187</sup> When asked if nuns would intervene to stop fights, she explained that sometimes they would but sometimes they would turn a blind eye.<sup>188</sup>

- 170 HIA 376 said in her statement that when she moved from House 1 to House 2, two other girls hit her on several occasions because she did not receive full marks in the reward system and that meant the whole house did not receive a weekly treat.<sup>189</sup> The Congregation told us that the reward system did not work in that way and that the weekly treat which was given on Friday evenings, and consisted of crisps and lemonade and occasionally an extra cigarette, was given out regardless of the marks lost by individual girls. They also confirmed that they have checked their records and there is no note of HIA 376 complaining about being physically bullied in this way.<sup>190</sup> There was a record of HIA 376 complaining to staff about these girls’ verbal abuse of her and that a member of staff, SJM 1, talked to the three girls together and sorted matters to HIA 376’s satisfaction.<sup>191</sup> HIA 376 explained when she gave evidence in person that the physical abuse happened at night in the dormitory and that she did not complain to staff because she knew that would only make matters worse.<sup>192</sup>
- 171 The Inquiry was able to trace one of the girls HIA 376 referred to, SJM 8. She provided a statement in which she denied hitting HIA 376 and also stated that she was never hit by nuns or staff in St Joseph’s and did not see them hit other girls.<sup>193</sup>
- 172 HIA 176 also told us that she was bullied by two other girls in St Joseph’s and that although she felt able to talk to a member of staff, SJM 43, who made her feel safe she could not tell her or any staff member about the bullying because she was frightened that if the girls involved were punished they would make her life more miserable.<sup>194</sup>

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185 SJM 070.

186 SJM 010.

187 Day 184, p.149.

188 Day 184, p.147.

189 SJM 061.

190 SJM 930.

191 SJM 25958-25959.

192 Day 187, p.64.

193 SJM 15252.

194 SJM 476.

- 173 HIA 233 told us about name-calling between her and other girls and SR 235 confirmed this and provided a copy of a contemporaneous explanation written by HIA 233 about a fight she was involved in that was triggered by name-calling.<sup>195</sup>
- 174 SR 235 told us that staff were vigilant about bullying, would deal with it immediately and never condoned it.<sup>196</sup> We noted that this was also the view of the SSI inspectors who inspected the school in 1987 and recorded observing staff intervening calmly to deal with physical confrontations between girls.<sup>197</sup> We also noted that when HIA 376 reported problems with other girls, staff convened the girls and addressed the behaviour with them.<sup>198</sup> Therefore, we reached the view that while a degree of bullying and physical confrontations might be expected in a training school for girls, staff were alert to this behaviour and intervened to stop it.

### Use of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

- 175 The ICU was opened in October 1990 and when the school was inspected in 1993, inspectors found that since it opened it had been used on 31 occasions, fourteen of which were attributable to six girls. The inspectors recorded that on 26 of these occasions the ICU was used because it was decided to keep girls who had returned to the school late at night and were unsettled and/or under the influence of alcohol or drugs separate from their house group until the next morning. They identified only five occasions when a girl was removed from her house unit to the ICU because of her disruptive behaviour.<sup>199</sup> The report of the regulatory inspection carried out in December 1994 recorded that the use of the ICU had reduced further, as it had only been used eight times in 1994.<sup>200</sup>
- 176 In her written statement, HIA 198 told us that after she ran away a few times from St Joseph’s she was placed in the ICU. She stated:
- “I only got to see one staff member for one hour a day. The remainder of the time I was locked in my bedroom.”<sup>201</sup>

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195 SJM 237.

196 SJM 290014.

197 SJM 22761.

198 SJM 25959.

199 SJM 2274.

200 SJM 2306.

201 SJM 034.

HIA 198 accepted, when she gave evidence in person and had the opportunity to consider contemporaneous records, that she was placed in the ICU to manage the risk her behaviour was presenting to herself, but she insisted that there should have been a better way to take care of her.<sup>202</sup> Contemporaneous records show that staff closely monitored HIA 198 when she was in ICU. She confirmed that while she was in the unit she received food, had access to the toilet and was allowed to listen to the radio and read magazines and at times watch television in the living room of the unit.<sup>203</sup> She remembered SR 234 being with her in the ICU and encouraging her to go to sleep.<sup>204</sup> However, she did not remember staff talking to her about her behaviour or why she was running away.<sup>205</sup>

177 We saw evidence in contemporaneous documentation of professionals communicating about how best to manage HIA 198’s behaviour and expressing concern about her being contained in the ICU for an extended period. However their conclusion, which was recorded by a psychologist (Michael Barbour) from the APRU who was working with HIA 198, was that keeping her in the ICU was the only way to try and keep her safe given the “unacceptably high level of risk” she was posing to herself.<sup>206</sup>

178 HIA 233 was transferred to St Joseph’s from Harberton House and was admitted on a Place of Safety Order. The intention was that the placement would be short term and that HIA 233 would return to Harberton House. However, during planned visits to Harberton House, including overnight stays, HIA 233’s behaviour continued to be challenging and an application for her to be made subject to a Training School Order was granted on 26 January 1993. HIA 233 told us in her written statement that she was content to remain in St Joseph’s because she felt safer there as there were no male members of staff or residents in the school.<sup>207</sup>

179 When HIA 233 gave evidence in person during Module 1 she was referred to what she said in her statement about St Joseph’s and she confirmed that she had no complaints to make about her time in the school and that she had “loved it” there.<sup>208</sup> However, she did tell us about the time she spent in the ICU and how she was transferred to the unit.

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202 Day 185, p.20.

203 Day 185, p.28.

204 Day 185, p.27.

205 Day 185, p 32 to 33.

206 SJM 199.

207 SJM 027.

208 Day 16, p.116.

- 180 She described the ICU, which she called the “lock up”, as having four cells and that each cell had a metal bed and red doors and bars on the windows. She said she was put there many times, usually for two or three days at a time and that she would be given her usual allocation of cigarettes and water but no food. She said that time in the “lock up” was a punishment and that she would be “trailed there by her hair”.<sup>209</sup>
- 181 SR 235 told us in response to this evidence that the ICU did not have cells but had three bedrooms, two for the use of girls sent there although normally only one girl would be in the unit at any one time, and one bedroom for the member of staff who was supervising the girl in the unit. She explained that the bed in each bedroom had a metal frame and was secured to the floor for the girls’ safety. She confirmed that the door to the ICU was red but stated that there were no bars on the windows. She explained when she gave evidence in person that if a child wanted a particular member of staff to supervise them and be with them in the ICU that was facilitated where possible.<sup>210</sup>
- 182 SR 235 explained that she reviewed the records in relation to HIA 233 and found she had four admissions to the ICU. One of these admissions was for an overnight stay, which occurred after HIA 233 was discharged from St Joseph’s and her behaviour was proving disruptive in Fort James children’s home. On that occasion she was admitted at 11.03pm on 31 January 1995 and released and moved to a hostel the next day.<sup>211</sup>
- 183 SR 235 provided copies of contemporaneous records that detailed the reasons for HIA 233’s other three admissions to the ICU which occurred when she was resident in St Joseph’s and observation notes about her behaviour in the unit. These records showed that discussions were held with HIA 233 while she was in the ICU to help her to reflect on the disruptive behaviour that had caused her to be placed in the unit. Before she was released from her first stay in the unit in November 1993 she agreed a new contract about her behaviour<sup>212</sup> and during her stay in March 1994 she responded in writing to questions about what behaviour had led to her being placed in the unit and her feelings about being there.<sup>213</sup> The records also detail the food HIA 233 was given when she was in the ICU in March 1994 and what she chose to eat.<sup>214</sup>

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209 SJM 026.

210 Day 186, p.54.

211 SJM 243.

212 SJM 242.

213 SJM 29179 to 29181.

214 SJM 29178.

184 We noted that although HIA 233 had only three admissions to the ICU while she was resident in St Joseph’s, two of these stays were for around forty-eight hours which may explain why she remembered spending considerable amounts of time in the unit. SR 235 stated that no girl was “trailed” into the ICU by the hair and usually girls would accept that their behaviour was out of control and that they would have to go to the ICU.<sup>215</sup> There are contemporaneous records to indicate this was the case, for example it was recorded on 9 June 1994 that staff were concerned that HIA 233 had been sniffing substances as she was very “high” and that she agreed to spend the night in the ICU.<sup>216</sup> However, it was also recorded that in March 1994 physical force was required to get HIA 233 to the ICU. The circumstances were recorded by the member of staff as a “major incident” which indicates they were unusual and she described requiring assistance from a colleague:

“...to remove her (HIA 233) physically – it was a case of dragging/pushing to the pool steps – she agreed to walk with [SJM 5] up the grass”

and that once in the ICU “HIA 233 screamed, kicked etc for over an hour.”<sup>217</sup>

185 Therefore, there is evidence of HIA 233 being physically removed to the ICU and spending extended periods in the unit. However, there is also evidence that she was properly monitored and cared for in the ICU, provided with food and assisted to consider her behaviour.

186 SJM 75 was in St Joseph’s from 1994 to 1996. She told us she was placed in the ICU on one occasion for fighting. She described the ICU as “a good place to calm down” and that a member of staff stayed with her and she was allowed access to puzzles and magazines.<sup>218</sup>

187 From the evidence we have considered we are satisfied that the ICU was not overused and that when girls were placed in it they were appropriately cared for and monitored. When SR 240 wrote to the NIO to propose the unit she explained that the Board of Management envisaged it being used as:

“...a temporary respite for a girl or girls who may be emotionally disturbed, suicidal or need space in a confidential setting to express grief, anger etc.”<sup>219</sup>

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215 SJM 29137.

216 SJM 29183.

217 SJM 29176.

218 SJM 29271.

219 SJM 1586

We consider that this intention was fulfilled and that there were no systemic failings in relation to the use of the ICU in St Joseph’s.

## Sexual Abuse

- 188 We received no allegations from applicants that they were sexually abused while in St Joseph’s. However we are aware from material received from the police that three former residents complained to them that they suffered sexual abuse in the school.
- 189 In 1998 a former resident, SJM 58 complained to the police that in the mid-1970s, SJM 4 had sexually abused her. She told the police the sexual abuse started when she was fourteen and was resident in House 1, the house SJM 4 worked in, and continued after she was transferred to House 4 until she left the school two years later. SJM 58 told the police that she thought another resident SJM 109 might also have been abused by SJM 4.<sup>220</sup>
- 190 SJM 4 was interviewed by the police and denied the allegations. She admitted buying gifts for SJM 58, and that she was a favourite of hers and known as “SJM 4’s child” but said that each house parent was known to have favourites.<sup>221</sup> Police also contacted SJM 109 who was shocked at the allegations, denied she was ever abused by SJM 4 and said she had the utmost respect for her.<sup>222</sup> The Director of Public Prosecutions directed no prosecution because the evidence was insufficient to afford a reasonable prospect of conviction.<sup>223</sup>
- 191 Another complaint was brought to the attention of the police by the congregation when a former resident, SJM 60, told a nun that a male member of staff who looked after the swimming pool in St Joseph’s sexually abused her.<sup>224</sup> The matter was not investigated by the police because once SJM 60 learned that the man in question was dead, she did not proceed with her complaint.
- 192 SJM 59 spoke to police in 2004 about her time in St Joseph’s from 1954 aged nine years until she left in 1961. She alleged that she was sexually abused on a regular basis by SR 238.<sup>225</sup> Police investigations found that SR

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220 SJM 4034-4040

221 SJM 4026

222 SJM 4026-4027.

223 SJM 4020.

224 SJM 4079.

225 SJM 4087-4093.

238 was still alive but suffering from senile dementia and it was determined that she could not be interviewed because of her medical condition.<sup>226</sup>

- 193 These are the only allegations of sexual abuse in St Joseph’s that we are aware of and we do not find that they amount to evidence of systemic sexual abuse. We also noted that HIA 195, who told us she was abused in Nazareth House by Father Brendan Smith, felt able when he visited her in St Joseph’s to tell a member of staff that he scared her. She said the member of staff told SR 240 who went out to see Father Smyth as he was leaving in his car and told him that he wasn’t welcome to visit HIA 195 again.<sup>227</sup>

## Emotional Abuse

- 194 HIA 178 told us that SR 237 made demeaning remarks about her mother in front of other girls:

“She told me that I would ‘end up in jail like your mother’ and also that ‘she didn’t want you and so we had to look after you’.”<sup>228</sup>

HIA 178 explained that she had not known until that point that her mother had been in prison.

- 195 HIA 178 also recalled SR 237 pulling curlers out of her hair which she had received as a present from a former day pupil at her school and confiscating a scarf she received from a former resident and telling her on both occasions: “We have no pets here.”<sup>229</sup> She also told us that when she told SR 237 that she had passed a music examination SR 237 slapped her across the face and she thought that was to ensure that she did not get above herself.
- 196 HIA 203 told us that when her older sister DL 219 came to visit her in St Joseph’s she was kept at the door and not allowed in. She told us that SR 237 and SR 242 said DL 219 was unholy and a fallen woman and that HIA 203 should not be associating with her. When she gave evidence in person, HIA 203 commented that she thought the nuns responded in that way because they had a funny attitude to unmarried women having children or to women who married outside the Catholic faith.<sup>230</sup>

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226 SJM 4113.

227 SNB 176.

228 SJM 334.

229 Day 184, pp.88 to 89.

230 Day 184, p.43.

197 HIA 249 described a lack of affection from the nuns:

“We were never shown any affection by the nuns - no love at all. They were very cruel. I remember feeling frightened of them all the time.”<sup>231</sup>

However, she acknowledged that her sister SJM 27 had a very close relationship with SR 248. The Sisters of St Louis confirmed this and explained that in 2010 they agreed to SJM 27’s request to be buried with SR 248 whom she considered to be a mother figure and that SJM 27 was the only person other than a nun to be buried in the cemetery at Middletown convent.<sup>232</sup>

198 HIA 376 told us that when she took an overdose in July 1983, a few weeks after her first admission to the school, she had to stay in hospital for a few days and her sister HIA 176 was not allowed to leave the school to visit her and her parents were not informed for a week. She said when she returned to the school she was not given food for three days and she believed this was a punishment for taking an overdose.<sup>233</sup> SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and explained the assessment and treatment that a girl who took an overdose would receive and stated that in her experience:

“There would never have been punishment meted out as HIA 376 describes.”<sup>234</sup>

She also explained that there was no record of HIA 176 asking to visit her sister.

199 HIA 376 said in her statement that SR 240 told her that her parents didn’t want her and that was why she was in the home and that she was dirty.<sup>235</sup>

200 HIA 176 told us that when she became pregnant at sixteen it was a result of being raped by a twenty-year-old man. She said that staff in St Joseph’s and her social worker SJM 56 knew the pregnancy was the result of a rape but provided no help to her.<sup>236</sup> Both SJM 56 and SR 235 told us that there are no references in contemporaneous records to HIA 176 telling them that the pregnancy was the result of being raped.<sup>237</sup>

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231 SJM 069.

232 SJM 22005.

233 SJM 064.

234 SJM 939

235 SJM 062.

236 SJM 477.

237 SJM 2931-29313 and SJM 29016.



- 201 HIA 176 also told us that when she was pregnant SR 240 called her a whore and said she was unfit to be a mother.<sup>238</sup> However, SR 235 pointed out that HIA 176 was allowed to stay in St Joseph’s when her pregnancy caused trouble with her parents and that after she had her child she brought her to St Joseph’s for an overnight stay. SR 235 also explained that staff assisted a number of girls who became pregnant during their time in St Joseph’s and that the independent living bungalow was converted to enable two girls to remain in the school with their babies.<sup>239</sup>
- 202 HIA 176 told us that SJM 4 subjected her to verbal and emotional abuse. She said that she called her a “Derry Hog” and laughed at her when she asked for a bra, saying that she would need to get a chest to get a bra.<sup>240</sup> SJM 4 denied that she behaved in this way and said that although some of the girls used the term “Derry Hogs” she never did.
- 203 We were concerned to note that when she was interviewed by the police about alleged sexual abuse SJM 4 admitted that the woman who alleged the abuse was her favourite and was known to be and that all house parents had favourites.<sup>241</sup>
- 204 When SR 235 responded to evidence from HIA 376 that a nun SR 246 favoured her and another girl, she pointed out that behaviour which favoured one girl over another would quickly have led to an enquiry by other girls:
- “They were very conscious of anything that could be perceived as favouring one girl over another.”<sup>242</sup>
- We consider this an accurate assessment of how girls would be alert to favouritism by staff and therefore we consider that the overt favouritism admitted by SJM 4, which included the girl in question being called “SJM 4’s child” was poor practice and should have been identified as such and addressed by senior staff.
- 205 HIA 176 told us that she found the public awarding of marks for behaviour humiliating.<sup>243</sup> However, we accept that the public allocation of marks was used to motivate girls towards good behaviour and reinforce the consequences of poor behaviour.

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238 SJM 470.

239 SJM 29016.

240 SJM 472.

241 SJM 4026.

242 SJM 941

243 SJM 473

- 206 HIA 233 told us that staff in St Joseph’s were kind to her and she particularly remembered SR 236 singing to her to try and calm her down.<sup>244</sup> She recognised that she was a “handful” and she recalled SR 235 calling her a “delinquent”. SR 235 told us she had no memory of this and that it was not the type of language she would have used to any of the girls.<sup>245</sup>
- 207 HIA 233 indicated that at times she felt anger towards staff in St Joseph’s because they did not believe her about the sexual abuse she suffered prior to her admission to the school. SR 235 told us that staff did believe that HIA 233 had been sexually abused and referred us to the minute of a review meeting held in January 1993,<sup>246</sup> where the implications of the abuse for HIA 233’s return home were discussed, and to handwritten notes of a discussion a member of staff had with HIA 233 about it.<sup>247</sup> However, the fact remains that HIA 233 felt that she was not believed about the abuse.
- 208 HIA 49, who was in the school from 1971 to 1974, told us she loved it there and said in her statement:
- “I’d never had a hug in my life and I got a hug off [SR 240]...They treated us like human beings and trusted us. The nuns were kind and considerate.”<sup>248</sup>
- 209 When she gave evidence in person, she confirmed this experience of the school and referred in particular to her mother being invited to stay at the school so that she and HIA 49 could spend some time reconnecting with each other.<sup>249</sup>
- 210 HIA 175, who was in the school from 1972 to 1974, told us that she was happy in St Joseph’s and that in particular SR 240 made her feel that she mattered:
- “You were made feel like you were wanted and were treated with warmth and affection which I had never experienced before.”<sup>250</sup>
- 211 HIA 195 who was in the school from 1977 to 1979 told us:
- “I loved it in Middletown. The nuns were brilliant. The staff members were so good to us.”<sup>251</sup>

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244 SJM 026

245 SJM 215

246 SJM 215

247 SJM 239

248 SJM 22253

249 Day 9, p.31.

250 SJM 22239.

251 SNB 176.

212 We carefully considered the allegations we have heard about emotional abuse in St Joseph’s, such as the derogatory remarks made by SR 237, and we noted the overt favouritism by staff described by SJM 4. We also took into account the positive accounts we have received about the warm care and attention witnesses told us they received in St Joseph’s and the clear focus from the 1970s onwards on promoting the emotional well-being of the girls. We concluded from all the evidence available to us that there was not systemic emotional abuse of girls in St Joseph’s.

## Neglect

### Medical Treatment

- 213 HIA 178 suffered from a disability caused by an injury at birth. Contemporaneous records and correspondence show that the congregation sought medical assistance about the disability, which entailed HIA 178 having appointments with an orthopaedic consultant in May and August 1949 and October 1950. When Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest inspected the school in December 1950, they recommended that a written diagnosis and prognosis should be requested from the surgeon.<sup>252</sup> This was subsequently received and the surgeon confirmed that no effective treatment was available.<sup>253</sup> HIA 178 accepted that she attended medical appointments but told us she had no memory of being encouraged or helped to do the exercises that the consultant had recommended.<sup>254</sup>
- 214 There is also a record of HIA 178 having a hospital stay of just under a month in August/September 1949 but it is unclear why the hospitalisation was considered necessary and what it achieved, and HIA 178 who was under two years of age at that time has understandably no memory of the reason for it. HIA 178 did remember having her head shaved for a medical appointment and she thought that might have been in relation to the treatment of ringworm.<sup>255</sup>
- 215 The congregation told us that a local doctor would visit the school fortnightly.<sup>256</sup> HIA 178 did not remember seeing a doctor but she did remember a dentist coming to the school.

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252 SJM 22963.

253 SJM 22937.

254 SJM 337.

255 Day 184, p.85.

256 SJM 22925.

- 216 HIA 249 remembered being sick in bed but did not remember seeing a doctor or a nurse. However, she remembered being taken to hospital when she fell off a chair and having her arm put in plaster.<sup>257</sup>
- 217 A doctor’s opinion was sought about the appropriateness of HIA 249 being in an industrial school because of her age and her fragile health. We saw a doctor’s written confirmation that HIA 249 suffered from congenital heart disease and his opinion that she was being cared for particularly well in St Joseph’s.<sup>258</sup> SR 235 confirmed on behalf of the congregation that HIA 249 was admitted to the Royal Victoria Hospital on 11 December 1955 in relation to her heart condition and remained there for nine days and that there was follow-up correspondence between the hospital and the school about her care.<sup>259</sup>
- 218 HIA 203 told us in her written statement that SR 237 did not believe her when she said she was feeling ill and that it was only through the intervention of a caretaker who noticed how swollen her jaw was that she was diagnosed as suffering from mumps. She told us in her written statement that she was left alone in the school while she was sick in bed with mumps, but clarified when she gave evidence in person that a nun brought her food although she was left mainly on her own.<sup>260</sup> Even though the Sisters of St Louis pointed out that there is no record of HIA 203 being sick with mumps she was definite that was the case.
- 219 HIA 176 remembered consulting a nurse who worked in St Joseph’s and also being seen by a local doctor. She told us she complained to the nurse about problems with her chest and was told it was phlegm. She linked this lack of treatment to asthma that she suffered from as an adult. She also told us that she did not attend a dentist while she was in St Joseph’s.<sup>261</sup>
- 220 SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and provided copies of documentation which recorded the medical attention HIA 176 received, including a referral for a chest x-ray. She also confirmed that when HIA 176 was in St Joseph’s, a nurse was employed in the school to tend to the girls and that a local doctor was available to advise on more serious

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257 SJM 071.

258 SJM 1333.

259 SJM 22010.

260 Day 184, p.36.

261 SJM 475.

conditions.<sup>262</sup> She explained that HIA 176 developed an abscess on her tooth when she was on holiday in Runkerry and that the records of that trip indicate that she developed a fear of the dentist. SR 235 notes that this may explain why HIA 176 received treatment for this abscess from the local doctor who attended the girls in St Joseph’s and why she did not have the regular dental check-ups which records show the other girls attended.<sup>263</sup>

221 HIA 176 also said that she was unprepared for puberty and that although SR 243 had been kind to her when she got her first period she did not provide any further guidance. SR 235 explained that the girls received sex education in class, and she assumed this would have covered menstruation, and that girls would have discussed such matters with house staff. We noted that the diaries which were maintained in the houses when HIA 176 was a resident in the school recorded when girls had their periods.<sup>264</sup>

222 We concluded from the evidence, particularly that provided in the contemporaneous records, that nursing care was provided on site and that the girls could avail of regular consultations with a local doctor and dentist. It is also clear that when specialised medical attention was required it was arranged. We also noted that SSI inspectors were satisfied with the health care that was available to the girls and the records that were maintained of illnesses and medical complaints and the treatment given for them. In the report of the inspection that took place in 1993 the inspectors noted that satisfactory arrangements were in place for medical, nursing and dental care and that, for example, the girls received dental check-ups every six months.<sup>265</sup>

## Education

223 HIA 178 told us that her education in St Joseph’s was inadequate and described being made to sit at the back of the class and having to teach herself to read.<sup>266</sup> Contemporaneous records show that HIA 178 did well in typing and elocution but she said she had no memory of these achievements.<sup>267</sup>

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262 SJM 29013.

263 SJM 29013.

264 SJM 29013.

265 SJM 1778.

266 Day 184, p.90.

267 Day 184, p.91.

- 224 HIA 249 also told us that she was made to sit at the back of the class and got no support to learn. She said that nuns beat her for mistakes and that day pupils from the locality who also attended the school were not beaten in the same manner.<sup>268</sup>
- 225 HIA 178 told us she had positive memories of learning to play music and Irish dancing.<sup>269</sup> HIA 203 was also positive about the music classes she attended and the nun who taught her, SR 269. She remembered being hit on the hands for not playing the piano correctly but recalled that it was SR 237 who hit her, not SR 269.
- 226 HIA 176 complained that the education at St Joseph’s was poor and that some teachers allowed the girls to engage in leisure activities such as playing bingo and watching films rather than learning activities.<sup>270</sup> SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and, while unable to comment on HIA 176’s comments about the behaviour of individual teachers, she did provide a copy of the annual education report for 1984-85 which showed the positive educational results achieved by the girls in that year.<sup>271</sup>
- 227 In contrast to the criticisms we received about the standard of education provided in St Joseph’s, we also received positive comments from witnesses about how they were enabled to learn in the school. HIA 84, who was in St Joseph’s in 1976-77, said it was one of the happiest times in her life and she appreciated the different classes available to her, including being able to learn to do tapestry.<sup>272</sup> Also, SJM 75, who was in the school from 1994 to 1996, told us that she had been expelled from her secondary school and that she learnt to read and write in St Joseph’s as the smaller class sizes made it easier for her to learn.<sup>273</sup>
- 228 We noted that in the 1993 inspection of the school the SSI inspectors recorded that Department of Education inspectors who had inspected the school in 1989-90 had commented on the good relationship that existed between staff and girls and how it would “undoubtedly lead to the promotion of higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.”<sup>274</sup> The inspectors also commented on the investment in the fabric of the school

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268 SJM 071.  
269 Day 184, p.78.  
270 SJM 474.  
271 SJM 29009.  
272 SNB 726.  
273 SJM 29271.  
274 SJM 1773.

and how it helped to create the necessary environment within which “the young people have the opportunity to learn and develop intellectually.”<sup>275</sup>

- 229 The DoJ in its closing submission referred us to the written report by a member of the Management Board who had visited the school in August 1995. As part of that visit she met with one of the teachers who informed her that education inspectors had visited recently. They had stated they were very impressed by the exam results achieved and her teaching methods and commitment and had requested that her training packages be made available to other schools.<sup>276</sup>
- 230 From the evidence we considered we reached the view that education was seen as a central element of the care provided to girls in St Joseph’s and that it was well resourced in relation to the number of teaching staff and the physical environment. There is evidence that girls undertook state examinations, which provided formal recognition of their academic attainment, and throughout the decades girls were taught to play musical instruments and benefited from elocution lessons.

### Enuresis

- 231 Since St Joseph’s mainly cared for older girls from 1952 onwards we heard very little evidence about the management of enuresis. However, we considered it worth noting that HIA 124, who was in the school from approximately 1974 to 1977, told us that after being punished for her enuresis in another children’s home she was too scared to tell the staff in St Joseph’s about her difficulties with it. She explained that a member of staff realised her difficulty and brought her new sheets and a rubber sheet and with her agreement arranged for a member of staff to wake her early so that she could change her bed and shower before the other girls were awake. HIA 124 told us that in time she stopped wetting her bed and that with the support of SR 240 in later years she shared her experience with other girls in St Joseph’s who were suffering with enuresis.<sup>277</sup>
- 232 We carefully considered the written statements, oral testimony and contemporaneous records and correspondence in relation to the care provided in St Joseph’s and we did not find evidence of systemic neglect.

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275 SJM 1773.

276 SJM 30047.

277 SNB 842-843.

## Unacceptable Practices

### Excessive Chores

- 233 HIA 203 was resident in the school from 1964 to 1967. She complained of having to do excessive chores and said she was constantly scrubbing floors and having to work in the laundry. She told us that as an older girl she was expected to supervise younger residents to make sure they bathed and washed their hair and that if they misbehaved SR 237 would “have a go at them and then have a go at me.”<sup>278</sup>
- 234 The Sisters of St Louis pointed out in its response that since all the girls were teenagers there would have been no need for HIA 203 to supervise them, but HIA 203 insisted when she gave evidence in person that because she was the oldest girl SR 237 would shout at her if younger girls did not behave properly.<sup>279</sup> She also clarified that she was not saying she had to scrub floors all day but that she had more chores to complete in the mornings than the girls who attended school and she then had to work all day in the laundry that served the school.<sup>280</sup>
- 235 HIA 178 also told us that she had to do excessive chores from an early age and did not agree with the response provided by the Sisters of St Louis that chores were age appropriate and were the sort of chores children would be expected to do in a family home.
- 236 HIA 249 described having to clean on a daily basis from a young age and told us that on one occasion a nun beat her because she put a cloth on her foot to help wax and polish the floor.<sup>281</sup> SR 234 responded on behalf of the congregation and explained in her statement that attaching cloths to feet was the method used for polishing the floor and that therefore she could not understand why HIA 249 would have been punished for doing that.<sup>282</sup>
- 237 HIA 376 complained about excessive chores and said that her hands were “red raw” from cleaning.<sup>283</sup> She described having to clean all day Saturday and moving all the chairs and furniture from rooms into the garden in order to clean the rooms.<sup>284</sup> SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and

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278 Day 184, p.14.

279 Day 184, p.14.

280 Day 184, p.16.

281 SJM 068.

282 SJM 22005.

283 SJM 062.

284 Day 187, p.90.



explained that at the time HIA 376 was in the school, although chores had to be done each day, the girls would be allowed a lie-in on Saturday mornings and after completing some chores with the assistance of staff they would have had Saturday afternoons free.<sup>285</sup> She pointed out that the furniture in the houses was much too heavy for it to be removed to the garden as described by HIA 376.<sup>286</sup> SR 235 also referred us to a description in the report of the 1987 inspection of the school of the relaxed atmosphere that prevailed on Saturdays and the outings that were arranged, and she confirmed that was her memory of Saturdays in the school at that time. She also provided a copy of a diary entry for 24 November 1984 that recorded HIA 376 having a lie-in until 1p.m. on that Saturday and referred us to other diary entries which record HIA 376 enjoying her work in the kitchen and expressing positive views about it. When HIA 376 gave evidence in person she insisted that cleaning was undertaken all day until teatime on Saturdays and that furniture had to be moved as part of that cleaning. She confirmed that she regarded the amount of cleaning she was expected to do as excessive.<sup>287</sup>

- 238 SJM 73, SJM 74 and SJM 75 provided positive statements about the care they received in St Joseph’s and told us that they had chores to do, which were allocated on a weekly basis, but that they were not onerous and were the type of chores they were expected to do in their family homes.
- 239 In response to the evidence of witnesses about excessive chores SJM 4 told us that it was important to have an organised regime that enabled the girls to contribute to keeping the “home” tidy and a reasonable place to live and she stressed that the daily chores were light duties and that external cleaners were used for more substantial cleaning.<sup>288</sup>
- 240 We accepted that until the start of the 1970s girls had to do daily chores which often involved a significant level of manual work. However, it appeared that once the new house units opened the chores were more akin to those that would be expected in a family home. We consider this change in expectation and approach reflected the wider societal norms about how much physical work children should undertake therefore we did not consider that the chores expected of the girls amounted to systemic abuse.

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285 SJM 935.

286 SJM 936.

287 Day 187, pp. 90 to 91.

288 SJM 21001.

### Force Feeding

- 241 HIA 203 recalled being force-fed beetroot by a nun she could not name. She said the nun forced the beetroot into her mouth and as a result she vomited. She confirmed that this had only happened on one occasion. When she was told by Counsel to the Inquiry that SR 240 told us that in her long time working in the school she had never heard of an allegation of force-feeding, HIA 203 was adamant that it had happened.
- 242 HIA 161 also told us when she gave evidence in person that she was forced in St Joseph’s with nuns holding her down and forcing food into her mouth.<sup>289</sup> The Sisters of St Louis pointed out in their closing submission that although she wrote a book about her time in care this is the first time HIA 161 had made such an allegation.<sup>290</sup>
- 243 From the evidence we have heard we do not believe that force-feeding was a regular occurrence in St Joseph’s and while these incidents may have happened we do not consider they amount to systemic abuse.

### Separation of Siblings

- 244 HIA 203 was admitted to St Joseph’s with her sister and they spent time together in the school. However, she told us that on one occasion she was prevented from spending time with her two brothers, who were resident in another children’s home. She explained that she saw her brothers as they were leaving the holiday house used by the Catholic congregations in Glenariff as she was arriving. She described how she and her brothers ran to each other but were pulled apart by a nun and not allowed to spend time together. She could not recall the name of the nun who pulled them apart. She also told us that she wrote letters to her brothers but that they did not receive them. The Sisters of St Louis provided documentation that showed that HIA 203 and her sister DL 222 had written to their other sister who was living in England and that correspondence had been received, but HIA 203 had no memory of writing to her sister.
- 245 HIA 249, who was admitted to St Joseph’s with her sisters in 1946, told us that she was separated from her sisters on arrival at the school. There is no living sister who worked in the school in the 1940s, but SR 235 who worked in it in the 1950s explained that at that time and in earlier years girls were allocated to dormitories according to their age and that could

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289 Day 184, p.177.

290 SJM 30112.

explain why HIA 249 was separated from her sisters. However, she pointed out that HIA 249 would have had contact with her sisters throughout the day in the classroom and at meal times.<sup>291</sup> We noted correspondence in 1947 between SR 248 and the MoHA about the appropriateness of HIA 249 and her baby sister residing in an industrial school. SR 248 pointed out in that correspondence that the continuance of the placement would have the advantage of enabling HIA 249 to have the companionship of her sisters.<sup>292</sup>

- 246 HIA 249 also told us that there was no privacy during family visits and that she and her sisters were taken in separately to meet their parents and that a nun was always in attendance. She suggested this may have been to prevent her older sisters from complaining about the treatment they were receiving.<sup>293</sup>
- 247 HIA 376 said that she and her sister who were in St Joseph’s together for two periods amounting to five months in total from 1983 to 1985 were kept apart. SR 235 explained on behalf of the congregation that at that time its approach was to give sisters placed in the school at the same time the opportunity to develop their own identity in recognition that many of the girls had been neglected in their homes and that tensions may have existed between siblings. She explained that the decisions about whether the sisters should be accommodated in the same house would have been influenced by what was known about their relationship and she exhibited contemporaneous records which showed that tensions existed between HIA 376 and her sister HIA 176.<sup>294</sup> However, she pointed out that the sisters would have been in the same class in school and that there would have been no barrier to seeing each other in the evenings.<sup>295</sup> HIA 376 accepted when she gave evidence in person that there were opportunities during the day when she could see her sister but that when she asked to see her in the evening it would depend on the mood of the staff member on duty whether she would be allowed to do so.<sup>296</sup>
- 248 HIA 376 also recounted a time when her parents visited and she was not allowed to spend time with them and her sister but was made to serve them tea and then was taken to a small television room where

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291 SJM 22003.

292 SJM 1341.

293 SJM 072.

294 SJM 928.

295 Day 187, p.95.

296 Day 187, p.96.

she observed them through a window.<sup>297</sup> SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and said that staff were not present during family visits unless there were restrictions regarding family access, so that the separation from her parents that HIA 376 described could not have been enforced and would have been “completely inconsistent with how we sought to maintain links between girls and their parents.”<sup>298</sup> HIA 376 accepted when she gave evidence in person that most weekends she was given leave to return home and therefore had access to her parents and her sister then.<sup>299</sup>

249 HIA 176 told us that she only learnt from another girl that her sister HIA 376 was hospitalised as a result of taking an overdose. She said that when she asked SR 240 about it she was told to go about her own business and that her sister would be all night. She also told us that she was not allowed to visit HIA 376 in hospital. SR 235 responded on behalf of the congregation and told us that there was no record of HIA 176 asking to visit HIA 376 in hospital.<sup>300</sup>

250 We concluded that there was not a policy of separating siblings in St Joseph’s and that even in earlier years when girls were allocated to dormitories according to their age there were still opportunities for them to socialise together during the day. We considered that although HIA 376 and HIA 176 were in different houses there were ample opportunities for them to spend time together during the day and when they were at home together at weekends. HIA 203 was obviously upset about not being allowed to spend time with her brothers when they met in Glenariff but we accepted that this approach may have been taken for the practical reason that the boys needed to leave the holiday home so that the girls could settle in. We do not consider that this one-off occurrence amounted to systemic abuse.

### **A False Impression Created for Inspectors**

251 HIA 203 recalled new linen being put on beds when someone official was coming to visit and that when the visit was over it was removed. She also recalled being told to be careful about what she said to any such visitors.<sup>301</sup> HIA 203 clarified at the hearing that the usual linen was of a

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297 Day 178, p.94.

298 SJM 939.

299 Day 187, p.94.

300 SJM 29007.

301 SJM 056.

good standard and regularly laundered but was adamant that new bedding was put on for official visits and then removed. When Counsel explained that SR 240 did not recall such practices in her time in St Joseph’s, HIA 230 responded “well, it didn’t happen maybe in her time, but it did happen in mine.”<sup>302</sup>

- 252 HIA 178 remembered that although the clothes she was given to wear were second hand they were lovely. She also remembered being given better clothes when inspectors were coming, but that those clothes were taken off her when the inspectors left. When Counsel put to her the Sisters of St Louis’s response that children received new clothes regularly she disagreed and was adamant that better clothes were given out for inspections and then taken back. She also commented that children were not allowed to speak privately to inspectors.<sup>303</sup> While we considered it possible that better linen and clothing may have been given out for use on days inspectors were expected, we do not consider that amounts to systemic abuse, particularly as the applicants told us that the standard of the regular linen and clothing was good.

### Religious Observance

- 253 HIA 203 and HIA 376 told us that there was an excessive emphasis on religious practice and observance. HIA 203 recalled having to go to Mass every day and having to pray regularly throughout the day, but the Sisters of St Louis stated that girls were only required to go to Mass once a week and were expected to attend daily assembly. HIA 176 accepted when giving evidence in person that it would have been assembly not Mass that they were required to attend each day.<sup>304</sup>
- 254 The DoJ in its closing submission pointed out in response to this evidence that the Training School Rules provided that each day should begin and end with a prayer and that Holy Days should be observed in such a manner as the Board of Management deemed appropriate.<sup>305</sup>
- 255 Inspectors considered religious observance in their inspections in 1987, 1993 and 1994 and did not find the approach excessive. Inspectors commented in the 1993 report that while the school was strongly influenced by a religious order:

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302 Day 184, p.49.

303 Day 184, p.87.

304 Day 187, p.54.

305 SJM 30044.

“Religion does not seem to be over-emphasised in the daily life of the school.”<sup>306</sup>

St Joseph’s was run by a Roman Catholic order for girls of that faith and therefore we consider that religious observance was an understandable aspect of the life of the school and the evidence we received did not suggest that it was excessive.

## Food

256 Miss Forrest inspected the school in November 1951 and observed:

“We saw a satisfying meal being prepared in the kitchen. The appearance of the girls is the best recommendation for their diet!”<sup>307</sup>

This was echoed by the recorded observations of Mr Hughes, who was a monthly visitor to the home in 1956:

“I have seen the children of this school monthly for the last 12 months and often during meal times. They are well looked after as regards food and clothing and always appeared to be very happy.”<sup>308</sup>

257 HIA 178 told us that often she did not get enough to eat and went to bed hungry.<sup>309</sup> HIA 161 also said that she did not receive enough food. She told us that on one occasion she and other girls locked themselves in the refectory and handed over a list of demands to be met before they would come out, including a demand for more bread and butter.<sup>310</sup> She explained that the lock-in came to an end because some of the girls needed to go to the toilet and that their demands were not met.<sup>311</sup>

258 While we accept that access to food is an emotional issue and that there may have been occasions when growing girls felt hungry we found no evidence of systemic abuse in relation to the provision of food in St Joseph’s.

## Smoking

259 HIA 176 criticised the congregation for facilitating smoking amongst the girls<sup>312</sup> and indicated that she started smoking in St Joseph’s. However

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306 SJM 1769.

307 SJM 1300.

308 SJM 25261.

309 SJM 337.

310 Day 184, p.177.

311 Day 184, p.178.

312 SJM 475.

the HSCB provided a record which showed that HIA 176 was already smoking before she was admitted to the school.<sup>313</sup>

260 HIA 233 told us that she started smoking at the age of thirteen in St Joseph’s because cigarettes were handed out at regular intervals during the day by the nuns and that she still smokes the same brand of cigarette today.

261 SR 235 explained that most of the girls who arrived in St Joseph’s were already smoking and while that was not encouraged neither was preventing them from smoking a major priority. She explained that girls could buy cigarettes with their pocket money but they had to hand them in and staff gave them out at regular intervals during the day. She accepted:

“With the benefit of hindsight and given the knowledge which is now available in relation to the dangers of smoking, I accept that permitting smoking was not in the best interests of the girls.”<sup>314</sup>

We accepted SR 235’s explanation and found it reasonable. Therefore, we found no systemic failing in relation to girls being allowed to smoke in St Joseph’s.

### **Lack of Preparation for Leaving Care**

262 The importance of preparing girls for life after care was recognised as early as 1952. Dr Simpson and Miss Forrest recorded in their report of the inspection they completed of the school in December 1952 that the new system of aftercare was working well and that SJM 44 visited the school regularly to get to know her future charges.<sup>315</sup>

263 SR 240 told us that in the 1970s a licensing committee operated that was a review committee made up of two members of the Board of Management and three or four external professionals, who were responsible for reviewing girls two to three months before they were due for release. She explained that the committee would interview each girl and relevant members of staff to ensure sufficient preparation had been made to enable her to transfer from care. In particular, the committee would focus on what job opportunities and accommodation were available to her and what further support could be given to her so that she could be released on licence.<sup>316</sup>

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313 SJM 22259.

314 SJM 216.

315 SJM 1284.

316 SJM 885.

- 264 HIA 203 complained about a lack of preparation for leaving care and that she was removed by SJM 44 and taken to live with a relative with whom she was not familiar. When HIA 203 was shown contemporaneous correspondence and records she accepted that SR 237 contacted her relatives to try and make arrangements for her and that she was taken to Belfast for a job interview although she has no memory of that happening. However, she insisted that plans for her future were never discussed with her and that she felt unprepared for the move and was not given the opportunity to say goodbye to her sister.<sup>317</sup> When she gave evidence in person HIA 203 acknowledged that some time after she left St Joseph’s she got into trouble and had to complete a prison sentence and that SR 237 arranged a hostel placement for her on her release from prison.<sup>318</sup>
- 265 HIA 161 also told us that she had very limited preparation for her departure from St Joseph’s. When she gave evidence in person she was shown copies of contemporaneous documentation that showed the nuns were liaising with her relatives and potential employers about possible openings for her but HIA 161 said she knew nothing about this and that she remembered being given ten-minutes notice of her departure.<sup>319</sup>
- 266 HIA 175, who was in the school from 1972 to 1974, told us that the training she received in Middletown helped her to get a job at a home for older people which was arranged by staff in Middletown. She stayed at that job for a short period before moving to a better job.<sup>320</sup>
- 267 Sister Canice Durkan, who worked in St Joseph’s from 1987 until it closed in 2000, had a particular responsibility for organising aftercare for girls and although she spent time in the school she was not attached to one of the houses.<sup>321</sup> She explained that former residents would keep in touch with staff and that outreach work continued with girls after they had settled in their own homes and in some cases had children.<sup>322</sup>
- 268 While it is clear that some of the applicants were not aware of the efforts being made on their behalf to organise appropriate aftercare arrangements for them, we were convinced that the school did its best to organise accommodation and employment for girls and maintained contact with

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317 SJM 056.

318 Day 184, pp.34 to 35.

319 Day 184, p.167.

320 SJM 22240.

321 Day 187, p.169.

322 Day 187, p.170.



girls and welcomed them back to St Joseph’s for visits after they were discharged from the school.

- 269 We have considered the statements we have received about unacceptable practices, the responses to them from the Sisters of St Louis, contemporaneous records and the findings of inspectors, and have concluded that there were no unacceptable systemic practices in St Joseph’s.

## Conclusion

- 270 Given the positive assessments by inspectors of the care provided in St Joseph’s throughout the decades and the accounts from some witnesses about how well they were treated in the school it is perhaps not surprising that we only received a small number of complaints about the school.
- 271 We carefully considered the evidence in relation to SR 237 and concluded that she was physically abusive to girls to the extent that it amounted to systemic physical abuse.
- 272 We found that the ICU was used appropriately and not over-used and that girls were not merely contained there but were given time to calm down, reflect on their behaviour and to consider how better to manage it in future. We were convinced that when SR 240 was in charge the emphasis was in supporting and developing girls and helping them to understand and manage their behaviour and to develop their self-esteem and confidence. We found contemporaneous evidence that staff maintained good contact with girls’ social workers and worked with them to develop and review care plans. Evidence from inspections indicated that girls were encouraged to maintain contact with their families, and family members were made to feel welcome when they visited St Joseph’s.
- 273 We found some evidence of overt favouritism being shown by some staff to chosen girls and while we consider this poor practice that should have been identified and addressed we did not consider that it amounted to systemic abuse.
- 274 The work of St Joseph’s was supported by a level of state funding that was generous in relation to voluntary children’s homes and meant that a good staff-resident ratio could be maintained, which enabled the provision of individual attention to girls and the creation of a more home-like environment. The stability of the workforce was also a positive factor that assisted in the provision of consistent standards of care and a

confident approach to working with girls, many of whom displayed very challenging behaviour including significant self-harm. The staffing ratio and consistency of the workforce was greatly assisted by the availability of the sisters who worked in the school and in particular those sisters who were senior managers. Inspectors found these senior managers were readily available to the girls despite their additional responsibilities for overseeing the operation of the school, liaising with government officials and being accountable to the Board of Management. It was clear that SR 240 in particular was successful in attracting funding for the school and persuading officials that specialist well-resourced care in appropriate surroundings with high quality facilities was needed to address the increasing complexity of the difficulties experienced by girls being placed in the school.

- 275 In addition to our finding in relation to SR 237 we found that the lack of formal inspections in the period from 1968 to 1987 was a systemic failing by the MoHA, and then the NIO, to ensure that St Joseph’s was providing proper care and meeting statutory requirements about the operation of training schools. This meant girls in the school at that time did not have the benefit of external monitoring of the facilities and practices in the school. However, once Mr Donnell was seconded to provide professional advice to the NIO about the running of the school and a programme of inspections was established and implemented there was a high level of detailed scrutiny of and support to the school.
- 276 Our consideration of St Joseph’s was assisted by the detailed records and diaries that were maintained in the school and retained by the congregation. They provided a clear picture of how the school was developed and operated over the decades and recorded levels of interest in, and concern for, the girls which demonstrated that the ethos, principles and policies that underpinned the school were genuinely applied in practice.

## Summary of Findings

We found the following systemic failings in relation to St Joseph’s.

### **The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Northern Ireland Office:**

- 277 **The lack of formal inspections in the period from 1968 to 1987 was a systemic failing by the MoHA, and then the NIO, to ensure that St Joseph’s was providing proper care and meeting statutory requirements about the operation of training schools. This meant**

**girls in the school at that time did not have the benefit of external monitoring of the facilities and practices in the school. (Para. 57)**

### **Sisters of St Louis**

**278 During the period of SR 237’s directorship, between 1957 and 1971, she was physically abusive to girls to the extent that it amounted to systemic physical abuse. (Para. 160)**

