

HIA REF: [ ]

NAME: DL 1

DATE: [ 23.10.14 ]

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

Witness statement of DL 1

I, DL 1 will say as follows :-

1. My name is DL 1 I live at [redacted] my date of birth is [redacted] I qualified from St Joseph's Training College (Trench House) Andersonstown Road, Belfast as a teacher in June 1967. My first job was at the Christian Brothers School on the Glen Road, Belfast [redacted] I taught there for approximately one year when a post was advertised near my home at the De La Salle

[redacted]

obtaining that job and I commenced work at the school I think, 1968. On the 1<sup>st</sup>

[redacted]

1981. I remained there until September 1985 when the school closed down. I then

[redacted] en

pressure and stress related issues.


2. [redacted]

taught R.E. Occasionally I was also obliged to assist in teaching science. During my time there I believed I enjoyed a good rapport with all the pupils. I took groups of pupils on

regular outings to Ards swimming pool, on educational visits and for brief periods to outdoor pursuits centres such as Ardnabann Centre at Castlewellan, County Down. I helped organize a sports day, Christmas concerts etc. I took some pride in the number of 16 year olds who successfully managed to gain grade C or above in their GCSE maths and geography despite the difficulties which these pupils faced in their personal lives and their long absences from school in their own areas.

3. At Rubane all the boys who are present in the home would have gone to the school. Many of them would not have been at school for a considerable period of time- up to 2 years in some cases and they all came from difficult backgrounds. At the school, to my knowledge, there was no written policy re discipline however corporal punishment was a sanction available and used in all schools at the time. During my time at teacher training college, discipline was not a subject that was taught and the subject was never broached to my recollection during the four years that I spent there. However, once I qualified in accordance with the tradition at that time, I and my class mates would have purchased whatever bits and pieces of equipment we would have needed for our teaching careers and one of these would have been a strap. If I recall correctly there was actually a shop at Divis Street in Belfast which sold same. Using the "strap" was not something I enjoyed doing, but I did have occasions when I would have to administer it. During my time at the Christian Brothers on the Glen Road, I would have had to use it occasionally and that was indeed the case at Rubane. I would have to say however, that the pupils at Rubane were, in my experience and opinion, less difficult to handle than those at Christian Brothers. Most of the difficulties which arose were not as any direct challenge to my own authority in the classroom or those of the other teachers, but difficulties between the boys themselves. When this occurred my preferred way of dealing with matters would be to have a pupil "put out" of the classroom to stand just outside the door until he had calmed down and the situation defused. Sometimes, however, I would have had to administer a slap sometimes one, sometimes two, but only on one occasion do I ever remember having administered anymore than that, and that was three times. This happened when I had driven a mini bus with a group of pupils on an educational visit. Apparently, a few pupils in the back seat were making rude gestures to police who were driving behind us. The police passed us and stopped the minibus and asked me if I was aware of what was going on. As a result, I administered three slaps to each of the culprits on our return. Quite often, once one slap had been administered, the pupil would immediately have left the classroom without permission. Inferably however the class periods lasted for 35 minutes and this would have resulted in the pupil being unsupervised for the remainder of the period. The pupil inferably turned up to the next class with another teacher. There was a very small teacher pupil

ratio and so there were always at least one or perhaps two teachers or ancillary staff on the premises not engaged in teaching at any specific time.

4. At the school the subjects which were taught were English, history, art, PE, science and woodwork in addition to religious education. There were usually about 70 pupils each year except for one year where the numbers increased dramatically up to about 90 if that was my recollection.
5. Occasionally, other teachers would refer a pupil to myself, as in my capacity as principal or vice principal. This was inferably for some difficulties that they had in the classroom. My usual punishment was to tell them to stand outside the door in the public area. This was, in my experience, something which they did not like doing and I thought was a fit punishment. In the public area, social workers would have seen them together with any other visitors and they were made to stand there to the end of the period, perhaps for 35 minutes maximum.
6. The school was regularly inspected by the Department of Education if I recall correctly and in particular a gentleman called Mr Weir would have called extremely regularly. There would have been no notice of such visits and the only notice which we would have had would be if it was a formal inspection. I often got the impression that Mr Weir liked to keep a close eye on the place because there was a very generous teacher pupil ratio and I suspected that he did not feel that this was merited.
7. Social workers became inevident around the early 1970's if I recall correctly. They would have called extremely regularly to both the school and the home itself. We as teachers always regarded them as something of a nuisance because inferably they would have had to call the pupil out of class which was an interruption to others. In and around the early 70's, four chalets were built to replace the dormitory accommodation. There would have been 10 to 12 students in each of the chalets and each chalet would have had a house mother and a house father. There were two sets of lay people who acted as house mothers and house fathers and one husband and wife (with 2 sons) and one set of nuns, if I recall correctly. I don't believe that the brothers themselves were  

8. I am of course aware of the reports of sexual and physical abuse which are now widespread in the media relating to Rubane House. I am absolutely shocked that such



'going ons' could have occurred. I find it difficult to accept that with so many external visitors calling into the premises during all of the period when I was there, that such things could have gone unnoticed. I am absolutely certain that I myself was never aware of any such abuse either physical or sexual. I feel betrayed now by the De La Salle order who apparently have accepted that such abuse did occur and have paid compensation in a number of cases. As I say, I was not aware in the slightest of any such impropriety either in the school or the residence or the premises generally. Prior to all of this coming out, I had looked back fondly to my time in Rubane. I always like to feel that I had empathy towards the plight of students. In relation to the allegations made against me personally, I categorically and emphatically deny and refute these. I never punched a pupil in my life. I do not recall the individuals concerned from their names only, but doubtless if there were photographs I perhaps would recall them.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed:

**DL 1**

Dated:

23.10.14