

WITNESS STATEMENT

(CJ Act 1967, s.9 MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3)(a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r.70)

Statement of **Fr. Francis ROSSITER**.....Age if under 18 **Over 18** (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: **ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST**.

This statement (consisting of: ... **3** ... pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signature: **F. ROSSITER**..... Date: **23rd May 2003**.....

I am a Roman Catholic priest and a monk of Ealing Abbey, Childbury Grove, Ealing, W5.

In 1967 I was elected Abbot of the Monastery of Ealing Abbey and held this position until 1991. The Abbott of the Monastery is also the Chairman of Governors for St. Benedict's Roman Catholic School, a position I held whilst I was Abbott.

I have been asked about a teacher of St. Benedict's by the name of John MAESTRI. Mr MAESTRI was appointed as a member of the teaching staff at St. Benedict's; I think he was appointed in 1971. During the time that Mr MAESTRI was teaching at St. Benedict's I am aware that he was living with the **Name Redacted** family for a period of time and at some stage moved to **DPA**, a property owned by the Monastery. At present, I do not know the dates that Mr MAESTRI lived at **DPA** but I may be able to find this out. When I refer to the **Name Redacted**, **Name Redacted** was a teacher at St. Benedict's for about **DPA** years, **Name Redacted**'s wife, **Name Redacted** lived in **DPA** with her children, **RC-A624**, **RC-A419**, **RC-A623** and **Name Redacted**, her children from a previous marriage. **RC-A624**, **RC-A623** and **RC-A419** attended St. Benedict's and **Name Redacted** was a **DPA** in the school.

In September 1983 the post of head of middle school became available and John MAESTRI was appointed with effect from January 1984. As Abbott I approved the appointment. Mr MAESTRI was well liked, hard working and an excellent teacher and appeared to be the ideal man for the post.

In January 1984 Mr MAESTRI took up the position, although I recall that he was unwell at the time, I have a feeling he had slight depression. Towards the end of January 1984 I became aware of an

Signature: **F. ROSSITER**..... Signature witnessed by: **GARETH MORGAN DS**.....

Continuation of Statement of Father Francis ROSSITER

incident between Mr MAESTRI and a pupil of St. Benedict's, [RC-A626]. The incident involved Mr MAESTRI behaving inappropriately towards [RC-A626] whilst in Mr MAESTRI's flat at [DPA]. Due to the passage of time, I cannot recall how I received this information; it could have come from Mr MAESTRI or [RC-A626]'s parents.

On Monday 30th January 1984 I visited [RC-A626] and his parents at their home address at [DPA]. I know I visited on this date because I have a record of the meeting in my diary which I have agreed to keep and produce if required.

I spoke to [RC-A626]'s parents who said that Mr MAESTRI had behaved inappropriately to [RC-A626] who was between 11-13 at the time, came into the living room and was asked to explain what had happened. I cannot recall clearly what he said but I remember being relieved that the incident wasn't more serious, I think it involved cuddling or something of that nature. If it had been more serious I think I would have remembered what it was.

[RC-A626]'s parents said that they weren't going to pursue the matter and would leave it in my hands but it may be that they suggested that he should not continue as master in charge of the middle school. Although I thought the incident wasn't gravely serious, I thought that it was unprofessional and imprudent of Mr MAESTRI to put himself in this position.

The following day, I spoke to Mr MAESTRI, probably whilst in my office, I told him what the [RC-A626's family]'s had said and that I didn't think it was possible for him to remain at the school. I also mentioned his ill-health at the time. Mr MAESTRI accepted this decision without argument. I can't remember what Mr MAESTRI said about my decision but he accepted it without disagreeing. I'm not sure whether Mr MAESTRI stayed until the end of term but he left within a matter of months. I'm sure I told Fr Anthony GILE, the head of St. Benedict's of what had occurred but nothing of this incident was written down or became common knowledge to the staff at the school. Since Mr MAESTRI left St. Benedict's school I corresponded with him occasionally but we have lost contact for several years. I believe that I have written a testimonial for Mr MAESTRI to apply to become a teacher and also for a degree that he was taking at Oxford.

Signature: F. ROSSITER..... Signature witnessed by: GARETH MORGAN DS

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About six months ago, I visited the [Name Redacted]s in [DPA] and [Name Redacted] told me that [wife] and he had something serious to tell me. They spoke in general terms about Mr MAESTRI interfering with [RC-A623] and nobody had known about this until recently. I offered to speak to [RC-A623] to see if I could do anything to help. [RC-A623] phoned me at the Abbey a short time later, certainly before Christmas 2002 and we arranged to go for a coffee. [RC-A623] and I didn't discuss the details of what took place with Mr MAESTRI but he expressed a desire to speak to Mr MAESTRI and I told him that he should if he felt that would help him. I think [Name Redacted] told me that [RC-A623] had subsequently spoken to Mr MAESTRI but I don't know any details of that meeting.

I have typed out a summary of the circumstances behind Mr MAESTRI's departure from St. Benedict's. I produce this typed A4 piece of paper as exhibit FRR/1.

Signature: F. ROSSITER Signature witnessed by: GARETH MORGAN DS

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