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Statement Number: S17

I saw [Name Redacted] on Sunday morning (19th December) I went over and gave her a hug as we were both upset. [Name Redacted] said to me, "YOU SAW [RS-A321] WITH HIM".

This triggered off a memory for me that I'd forgotten about. I was so shocked and upset I don't think I even replied to [Name Redacted] about the incident.

I recall [RS-A321] being at the school a number of years ago. At that time I was the teaching assistant for Mr LEAT, who was then teaching [DPA] class.

In that class there was a fish tank which I took responsibility for cleaning out as and when the water got clouded and it needed to be cleaned.

It would always take me ages to clean out as it was such a massive tank, so I would always clean it in my own time either at lunch or in the afternoon as I didn't have enough time when I was working.

Sometimes I would mention to him that I was going to clean the fish tank and other times I wouldn't, depending on where I had been working that day.

I remember going into the classroom going in through the door on lunchtime to clean out the tank. I went in through the classroom, which is in the older part of the school and is a square room. I thought I saw [RS-A321] sitting on Mr LEAT's lap by the window. They weren't sitting right at the back of the classroom, but slightly into the room.

As I walked in they both moved quickly. Because of the amount of time since this happened I cannot recall if they stood up or just moved apart in a seated position. Mr LEAT said that someone had upset [RS-A321] in the playground. I don't recall what else he said, but I do remember that [RS-A321] was smiling and not upset. I didn't think much of this at the time as Mr LEAT was her class teacher at the time. It would have been natural for Mr LEAT to sort any problems out that [RS-A321] had been having.

The children that Mr LEAT used to teach all seemed to like him. I would often witness the children hanging on to his legs in the class and they would always shout "Mr LEAT, Mr LEAT" to get his attention if he walked into the class when I was teaching.

I don't think that I said anything to [Name Redacted] about remembering this because I was in shock and felt very upset. I do recall [Name Redacted] saying that [RS-A321] had told someone in March this year about Mr LEAT but I was so upset by what I'd just remembered I didn't take it all in.

Nigel LEAT would also seem to have "favourites" in his class. They were always girls who would just hang around him and who he would always get to go off and do jobs for him, such as taking the register or getting them to go off and give messages to other teachers.

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In all my time at the school I have never worked in the classroom with Nigel LEAT. I have had [DPA] children go through Hillside School. [Child] my eldest child was in Nigel LEAT'S class in 2004. I have spoken with [Child] and she has no memories of concern about Nigel LEAT.

Nigel LEAT seemed to be a pleasant teacher. He was quiet and didn't socialise much with staff at lunchtimes.

It was fairly common for Nigel to come and sit in the dinner hall with the children from his class at lunchtime. Occasionally he would sit with some of the children he had previously taught, but never with the younger children. Sometimes this could happen 3 to 4 times a week and then maybe only once the next. I didn't monitor this as such so can't be specific to exactly when this happened.

Sometimes Nigel would go out and get fish and chips which he would bring back in, and would often share with the children. He would be sat on a table of 8 children (this is the standard size of table) but I noticed that he would only ever share with certain children, and often not all the children on the same table.

I did sometimes hear the children who didn't get chips grumble and complain that it wasn't fair.

I sometimes saw him also say to some of the children – again the same one's he would share his chips with, that he wanted to eat some of their lunch. This was usually relating to chocolate bars or other nice things they had to eat. He would ask for half or occasionally pick the item up and say it was his favourite and ask for it. This was all done in good humour and the kids seemed to enjoy the banter and would often offer him their crisps and things like that.

It wasn't behaviour that was untoward but it was noticeable that he didn't treat all the children the same and that he had favourites.

These 'favourites' were always girls and never boys. They were usually vulnerable children and with unstable or difficult family backgrounds. It was also noticeable that these females would usually be [DPA] haired.

From memory some of these children were pupils called [RS-A304] [RS-A320] who [DPA] and either [Name Redacted].

It was so noticeable, that at lunchtime the dinner ladies would often talk about it. Occasionally Nigel LEAT would keep a child back in the class or would come to collect a child early from lunch. He would say that he was doing extra work with the child or that they had a job to do. Once or twice a child would come and say that they had to go back to the class early.

Everytime it was for something 'official' so it was never questioned.

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As a teacher Nigel seemed really disorganised and never seemed to have any lessons planned. However as a person he was approachable unless he was given any criticism and then he would get into a huff and make life really difficult. During my time in his class I felt that he used to favour some of the girls in his class. These girls were

RS-A325

RS-A320

and RS-A326

I felt he took too much interest in these girls and he used to say to me that they reminded him of his daughter. He didn't elaborate why this was but he would particularly say this of RS-A320

He would sometimes give these girls the better jobs to do rather than other pupils in the class. But he would always take these girls out of class for additional help with lessons, particularly RS-A320 in the second year I was at the school.

RS-A320 was academically below standard however there was a young boy in the class who was also academically below standard. I would always have to work with the male pupil whilst Nigel would work with RS-A320

I also observed him keeping these girls in class at break and lunchtimes. I would often return from my break to see him alone in the class with one of the girls.

I don't know what Nigel would do at lunchtime as I would usually leave the school to take my break.

My role as an LSA was not to take the whole class but to support more needy children in lesson time with the teacher. Although Nigel would only leave the class with RS-A320 for 5-10 minutes at a time I didn't feel it was right that I was left in sole charge of the rest of the class. Really I should have been the person taking RS-A320 out if the needed additional individual support.

I also noticed that he wouldn't tell RS-A320 off or to calm down like other teachers would. RS-A320 had a habit of jumping up and down in front of you and making noises. All the other teachers would tell her to stop, but Nigel would laugh and comment on how funny she was.

The favouritism that Nigel showed to RS-A320 was blatant.

In around Spring 2008 I went with Pam TRUMPER to speak to Michelle BAMFORD the deputy head.

Pam and I told Michelle that we weren't happy with Nigel's behaviour towards to RS-A320 I told Michelle that Nigel would allow RS-A320 to sit on his knee on the carpet and he would bounce her up and down.

I told Michelle that as a mother I wouldn't like my child to be handed like that by a teacher.

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