

P R E S S R E L E A S E

STATEMENT FOR ALAN HART
REPORTER ON THE NEWS OF THE WORLD
IN RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS REGARDING KNOWL VIEW SPECIAL SCHOOL ROCHDALE

The Director of Education for Rochdale, Mrs Diana Cavanagh, said:

"In September 1990 when the Education Department were informed of a serious incident of inappropriate sexual activity involving boys at Knowl View, a full investigation was set up.

"It is unfortunately true that an intruder was able to gain access to the school during the night with the help of pupils and to commit sexual offences against one or possibly two boys. Parents were immediately informed.

"Full information about the intruder was passed immediately to the Police and the Probation Service; he was not prosecuted for that offence. In October 1990 he was however jailed for a sexual offence against a boy (not connected with Knowl View).

"Information about the conduct of a former member of staff relating to this incident is in the hands of the Police.

"Boys at the school in 1990, as now, were emotionally or behaviourally disturbed, some had been the victims of sexual abuse and some had been abusers themselves. In some cases they brought previous patterns of behaviour into the school.

"In January 1991 other information concerning inappropriate sexual acts between the boys was brought to the attention of the Education Department and a full conference of all relevant agencies was convened. As a consequence of the concerns an independent consultant child psychologist was asked to conduct an investigation into problems at the school and made recommendations about how they should be solved. These have been fully discussed with all involved in the school.

"The recommendations have now been put into practice. I cannot agree that the report was a 'whitewash'.

"All these events took place at a time when the school was suffering from staffing problems caused mainly by illness which meant that appropriate cover was difficult to arrange, particularly at night.

"Since then the security system at the school has been changed. Doors are alarmed and boys are no longer in a position to assist anyone without authority to gain access to the school.

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