

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: SIMPSON, MARILYN CAROL

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18)

Occupation: ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

This statement (consisting of 7 page(s) 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 in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: M C SIMPSON

Date: 08/10/2014

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (supply witness details on rear)

I am Marilyn Carol SIMPSON and I am currently an Activities Co-ordinator at Aden Court Care Home, Mold Green, Huddersfield. I have worked there eleven years, since 2003.

Previously I have worked for Kirklees Education Inspectorate April 1987 – to 1990 and then in 1990 I was employed by Rochdale Council as a Special Needs Advisor, responsible for a group of special schools and support services and also had responsibility for behavioural development and difficulties for pupils, plus I did training for staff and head teachers.

I hold a Bachelor of Education degree, and trained as a teacher, plus I hold a diploma in Special Education at Leeds University. I worked for many years in the Yorkshire area, becoming Head Teacher at Turnshaws Special School, Kirkburton, Huddersfield. I was Head Teacher for six years (1981 – 1987) before moving to Kirklees Education Inspectorate.

On arriving in Rochdale, it was completely different, the focus was on re-organising special schools and educational development and it was also about dealing with the difficulties that arose in Rochdale, plus the role of Ofstead was being implemented. There was a lot of implementation of National Strategies e.g. 'Literacy Hour' and 'Numerous Hour'

I also noted that politics had a major influence, and on reflection it was definitely a controlling influence of what was or was not implemented in the Education Department. My immediate line manager was Cliff BENTLEY (Chief Advisor) and above him was Diane CAVANAGH, who was Director of Education. A colleague was Selwyn HODGE who became Chief Advisor after Cliff BENTLEY.

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I recall when I first arrived in post that there was the incident at Knowl View School involving Roderick HILTON and that I was involved in a variety of meetings, both at the school and also internally at the Education Department. I have viewed exhibits RC/7/O/6 and RC/7/L/2 in relation to meetings held with staff at the school and I can agree I was present. I was obviously new to what was going on at the school and so as I was working closely with Brian WILLIAMS who took the lead during the meetings. Brian's role was Assistant Education officer for Special Needs and he had had previous dealings at Knowl View School.

My impressions from those meetings were that the school was ill-run, with no leadership, the pupils were like 'lost souls' – there was no direction. I couldn't work out why it had been left like that and so I asked the question and was told about it was being considered for closure.

Consequently we had a number of meetings and then it was decided to recruit a new Headteacher and re-establish a professional running of the school. I recall some staff members were dismissed. I was then involved in the recruitment of the new Headmaster who was Stephen BRADSHAW. Steve BRADSHAW did put structure into the school, implement training and there was an improvement, which I did witness on my visits.

I also recall meeting Harry WILD who was chairman of the Governors and this was probably when Stephen BRADSHAW was interviewed. As time went on, after Steven BRADSHAW was appointed, I formed the impression that the relationship between the pair of them was not particularly compatible. I can recall him and this staff making comments if they knew Mr WILD was attending a meeting or coming to the school. I only met him on a few occasions and found Mr WILD bullish and arrogant. I have viewed exhibit RC/22/N/3 which is on microfiche and can recall the incidents revolving around Smith Street toilets, and feel sure that Brian WILLIAMS was tasked with taking appropriate action with the agreement of Diane CAVANAGH. This would have involved the pupils being seen by the Psychological Department.

In relation to the paragraph about myself and Cliff BENTLEY stating that we considered that the sexual activity being described was normal behaviour in a "boys' school", I totally refute that we would have said such a thing nor did we hold that perception, particularly as it is in complete contrast with Cliff BENTLEY's recommendations (over the page) that all pupils should be interviewed (which I agreed with). The author of the report, who may well be Stephen BRADSHAW, has got this comment completely wrong.

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I have also viewed exhibit RC/7/I/2 in relation to a meeting on 25th June 1991, and can recall Councillor MOFFATT as Chair of Education from the Labour Party. She was very caring. I do not recall Detective Inspector HENDERSON, but I do remember Val MELLOR. I do remember being at the meeting and that Brian WILLIAMS and Cliff BENTLEY interviewed the staff following the incident. The aim of the meeting was to take the school forward on a positive note.

I have also viewed exhibit RC/7/I/1 that relates to a meeting on 12th September 1991 and it suggests that we were proceeding in the right direction collectively.

Following this, I recall Val MELLOR presenting her report and it was received positively by all concerned. During that time I would have been visiting the school, monitoring the education and providing training, plus supporting Steve BRADSHAW in implementing systems in the school.

I recall there were difficulties with the staff and implementing a lot of the changes. I can say that the children appeared happier, and I attended events at the school, and the atmosphere was of gainful activity. At no time during this period was I made aware of any physical or sexual abuse involving the staff or pupils or at least to the best of my recollection.

I have also viewed exhibit RC/21/C/5 and I do remember RO-F8, whom I would describe as reluctant to embrace change. I do not recall the actual report but I agree that it was by myself and it is obvious that he had ignored school guidelines that were put in place by myself and Steve BRADSHAW.

There was always something going on at Knowl View, although I can't recall the details of any specific incidents.

In fact, the closure of Knowl View School was probably the best thing in the circumstances and towards the end, I too endorsed that it should close.

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Page 4 of 4

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