

## **Residential Schools Investigation**

*An investigation into the nature and extent of, and institutional responses to, child sexual abuse in residential schools, including schools in the state and independent sectors and schools for children with disabilities and/or special educational needs.*

### **October 2018 Update Note**

1. The Inquiry is today inviting applications for core participant status in the Residential Schools investigation. This note provides an update on the matters that the Inquiry proposes to explore in this investigation, and the methodology that will be adopted.
2. The Inquiry's residential schools investigation has been gathering information and carrying out a scoping exercise since it was announced in January 2016. The following matters of context have informed the Inquiry's approach to this investigation:
  - a. Around a third of calls into the Inquiry expressing concerns about child sexual abuse refer to schools (both day and residential);
  - b. Given the breadth of the sector it would not be sufficient for the Inquiry to focus on one or two schools;
  - c. Whilst the scoping phase of the investigation has focused on the residential school sector, the vast majority of residential schools have a high proportion of day students and many of the issues which arise are common to both day and residential schools.
3. The Inquiry has received information on over 100 schools from individuals contacting the Inquiry. The Inquiry has written to over 90 institutions in England and Wales requesting information about their role in safeguarding children. Information has been



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sought from over 40 schools where there have been convictions of members of staff for child sexual abuse. There has been close cooperation with the police resulting in briefings on over 30 schools and over 15 police operations. As a result of this scoping exercise, the Inquiry has received and reviewed over 126,000 pages of documents to date and has determined that public hearings for this investigation will take place in two phases.

4. **Phase one** will consider:
  - a. Non recent abuse in residential schools for boys with behavioural/emotional problems (now closed) and in prep schools (now closed);
  - b. Residential music schools;
  - c. Residential special schools.
5. The Inquiry will consider safeguarding best practice at the schools which are included as part of the investigation and will not focus exclusively on failures to protect children in the past. In some cases, while a particular school is included in this investigation, the school will not have any reported and/or substantiated cases of child sexual abuse. It follows that the fact that a school is included in either Phase one or Phase two of the investigation does not mean that it is being asked for evidence on failings; some schools' evidence will focus on best practice in protecting children from abuse.
6. **Phase two** will be a thematic/issue based investigation of the schools' sector. A scoping exercise to gather data on various day schools has already begun. Phase two hearings will be held some time after those in Phase 1. The themes currently being considered by the Inquiry are:
  - a. Governance and management;
  - b. Inspection and monitoring;
  - c. Recruitment and termination of employment;



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- d. Whistleblowing and reporting;
  - e. Peer on peer abuse;
  - f. The culture of schools vis a vis safeguarding including sexuality, gender, class, openness etc.
7. Some Phase two issues affecting residential schools also arise in day schools. It is likely that the investigation will need to look at some evidence relating to day schools to ensure it understands the sector fully.
8. The investigation is now inviting applications for Core Participant status for **Phase one hearings only**. The Phase one hearings will take place in 2019 for two weeks. Those individuals/institutions with an interest in the Phase two hearings will be given an opportunity to apply for Core Participant status at a later date.
9. This update note provides further detail on the **Phase one** hearings in order to inform those who are considering whether or not to apply for Core Participant status.
10. A further update note will be published in due course when core participant applications are sought for Phase two.

## PHASE ONE

### (a) Closed schools report

11. The Inquiry has received information about a number of closed residential prep schools and schools for children with emotional and behavioural problems. The Inquiry is aware that the sexual abuse of children in these institutions occurred largely in the 1960s - 1980s and, for the most part, the schools have been closed for some time. This has made seeking information in relation to the institutional response to allegations of abuse and the abuse itself more difficult, and in some cases impossible, as records have been lost and/or there is no existing institution to which a



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request for information can meaningfully be made. The legislative framework has also changed considerably since these schools were open<sup>1</sup>.

12. However, despite (i) the difficulties associated with gathering evidence and (ii) the different legislative landscape, the Inquiry wishes to undertake an investigation in relation to these closed schools because of the prevalence and scale of the abuse and because the documentary evidence we have received to date suggests that there were numerous institutional failings. Because of the evidential difficulties, this part of the Phase one investigation will necessarily be limited in nature.
13. Accordingly, this part of the investigation will comprise a document based review which will consider and report on all written evidence available from published and unpublished sources in relation to a number of institutions (the closed schools report). The review will include consideration of the following institutions:
  - a. Feversham School (Newcastle upon-Tyne);
  - b. St William's School (Market Weighton);
  - c. Sheringham Court School (Norfolk) and Thurlby Manor (Lincolnshire);
  - d. Ashdown House Preparatory School (East Sussex) (it is important to note that there is a school of this name which is open and which is run by Cothill Educational Trust. We will be considering a previous incarnation of the school of the same name but which to all intents and purposes is now closed, being under completely different ownership and management by Ashdown House School Trust Limited);
  - e. Sherborne Preparatory School (Dorset); (there is also a school of this name which is open. We will be considering the school of the same name, which was effectively closed in 1998 when the headmaster/proprietor was disqualified by the Department for Education. Since that date, the school has

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<sup>1</sup> Not just in respect of recruitment, safeguarding and monitoring but in the sense that such schools (then termed 'approved schools') no longer exist.



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been under different ownership, is run as a charitable trust and is administered by a board of governors).

- f. St George's School (Norfolk and Suffolk); and
- g. Dalesdown School (West Sussex).

14. The Inquiry intends to prepare and publish a closed schools report before the Phase one public hearings. This will set out in one place: (i) details of the abuse (available from public sources as a result of the convictions); (ii) any details of institutional failings which emerge from the documentary evidence (for example, whistleblowers being ignored, a closed culture, abusers not being reported or monitored properly). The report will be adduced at the Phase one public hearing, but it is not currently envisaged that oral evidence will be heard in relation to this discrete part of Phase one.

## **(b) Residential music schools**

15. Instances of child sexual abuse in music schools have been widely publicised. The Chair and Panel wish to explore whether there are any factors which are peculiar to residential music schools which give rise to opportunities for abuse of children.

16. The Inquiry will consider evidence in relation to the following institutions:

- a. Chetham's School of Music (Manchester),
- b. The Purcell School for Young Musicians (Hertfordshire),
- c. Yehudi Menuhin School (Kent),
- d. Wells Cathedral School (Somerset),
- e. Ripon Cathedral Choir School (North Yorkshire),

f. Westminster Cathedral Choir School (London).

17. The Inquiry will also be seeking and considering evidence from the Choir Schools' Association, institutions which regulate the sector, CPS, police and academics who have an interest in the sector.

18. The Inquiry currently intends to hear oral evidence from witnesses in relation to this part of Phase One.

**(c) Residential special schools**

19. Children with special educational needs are amongst the most vulnerable children in our society. Some children with special educational needs are in residential special schools for 52 weeks of the year and have little contact with their families/their community. Some children are unable to tell people about abuse due to sensory impairments or learning difficulties; others have behavioural problems which can obscure signs of abuse and which can act as a barrier to being believed.

20. The Chair and Panel consider it necessary to consider in some detail the residential special school sector.

21. Evidence from the following schools will be considered as part of this phase of the investigation:

- a. Appletree School (Cumbria);
- b. Stony Dean School (Buckinghamshire);
- c. Stanbridge Earls School (Hampshire);
- d. Chelfham Mill School (Devon);
- e. Fullerton House School (South Yorkshire);
- f. Royal School Manchester (Seashell Trust) (Cheshire);
- g. Marland School (Devon);
- h. Muntham House School (West Sussex);



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- i. Southlands School (Hampshire); and
  - j. West Heath School (Kent).
22. Evidence from a number of these schools will focus on the measures they currently have in place for protecting children from child sexual abuse, including peer on peer abuse, rather than evidence of failures to protect children.
23. The Inquiry is also requesting evidence from regulatory bodies such as the Department for Education, Ofsted and Estyn and will be seeking evidence from charities in the sector and experts such as Dame Christine Lenehan who recently conducted a review of the residential special school sector.
24. The Inquiry currently intends to hear oral evidence from witnesses in relation to this part of Phase One.