

The issue of sexual abuse and inappropriate relationships between teachers and pupils at both R.N.C.M. and Chetham's is finally being aired publicly and properly. It has been a long time coming - far too long. It was allegedly going on years before Martin Roscoe began his campaign, and that was over ten years ago - time for generations of students and school children to have been exposed to potential abuse whilst the establishment allegedly turned a blind eye.

The successful conviction of Michael Brewer has brought about a flood of new allegations against similarly minded teachers. In addition, renewed attention has been given to the 2001 sequence of events at the R.N.C.M. Most people involved with young people, as well as parents and the multitude of young musicians who spend their school and secondary education free of being prey to the sort of life-altering despicable acts of the few who perpetrate these acts, must be horror-struck.

Over the last decade and more, Martin Roscoe has done more than anyone to expose this. I am hoping and praying that it will never have to be exposed again.

Unlike Martin, I have never held a post of any kind of position at either institution, and so have no first-hand experience of the kind he has. However, as an ex-pupil of Chetham's (1964 - 1971), an ex-student of the R.N.C.M. (1972 - 1976), and a close friend of Martin Roscoe (he was Best Man at my wedding in 1980, and we have been a regular two-piano team since 1976), it is time to speak out.

It is a difficult position from which to comment. For one thing, my seven years in the senior school as a day-pupil at Chetham's finished years before Michael Brewer was appointed, and the first time I ever taught at the school (which was only occasional anyway) was in 2008. Thus my knowledge of what went on under Brewer was entirely based on second hand information and gossip, although there was plenty of both.

For another, I was a contemporary student at the R.N.C.M. with both Malcolm Layfield and Martin Roscoe. I never got to know Layfield, other than to say hello and to establish that we had little in common other than an ability to read music, but I did get to know Martin Roscoe to the degree described above. This friendship was already well-established as long ago as 1973. After leaving the R.N.C.M. in 1976, I had very little to do with it, and certainly never taught there in any capacity at all until 2011. Thus, although I was kept very much in the loop as to what was going on, I met almost none of the victims involved, and I had no first-hand knowledge or experience.

But I did feel very involved, initially mainly because of increasing concern for Martin Roscoe's health, and the effect it might have on him long term, both professionally and personally. This was notwithstanding that I was entirely unsuitable as a witness or even to make a statement to the press, because I had no testimony to offer.

However, I have always been appalled at the degree to which many staff members in music institutions succumb to the temptation of abusing their positions for personal power - sometimes to the extent of verging on the sociopathic. As we know, in society in general, the power-hungry can achieve gratification through anything between bullying in the school playground to being a serial killer, and all points in between. Those points in between can include empire building - a tendency amongst a certain type of music teacher worldwide - psychological cruelty, physical abuse, sexual abuse and rape. And those aspects of their

behaviour are usually serial. That it goes on to such an extent is obviously an embarrassment to the majority of teachers, many of whom are totally devoted to the well-being of their students.

I, myself, experienced very little of it as a student, other than the ubiquitous destructive empire-building that is endemic to so many areas of the music world, and which was allowed to run rife in the keyboard department of the R.N.C.M. when I was studying during the first half of the 1970s.

But there was always gossip - particularly about one very prestigious piano professor who is now dead, and about whom the stories - now out in the open - I have absolutely no hesitation in believing. That particular individual was a power-monger the likes of whom I had never experienced before; his apparent public disdain for the students of any other teacher, and the cruelty he was alleged to have shown towards certain of his own students were two of the symptoms of his personality. He seemed to be some kind of self-appointed tin god who enjoyed a level of adulation from many quarters that was inexplicable and bordered on the ridiculous. That he had been a fine performer on the piano prior to being appointed at both the R.N.C.M. and at Chetham's did not mean he would be a good teacher. And he wasn't the only one - just the power-monger who was most successful at convincing the college authorities that he was worth employing, for whatever reason. I firmly believed that he could not be a good teacher entirely because of his power-mongering tendencies in all its forms - allegedly including sexual abuse. And if you are so inclined, please do not send me a list of his famous ex-pupils to prove he was a great teacher, because it would prove nothing, other than the existence of red herrings.

However, for all the childish and ludicrous jostling for position and gossip-mongering that formed an inevitable part of the culture of empire-building on the part of certain teachers, neither I nor any of my close friends - male or female - personally ever experienced anything sexual - at least as far as I am aware.

However, it is well-known that sexual abuse is much more about a weak person using an advantageous position to exert power over the victim, rather than about carnal desire. It is one of many primitive instincts that are increasingly allowed to run riot in our modern world. My personal hatred of that particular primitive instinct within the music world - that and our personal relationship - motivated me to support my friend Martin Roscoe in his campaign. This was despite my feeling that it might well be undermined and doomed to failure by the likely closing of ranks against a whistle-blower, and what appeared to be total determination on the part of the R.N.C.M. to blindly go ahead with the appointment. This was to ignore not only Roscoe's protestations, but also those of several others who followed in his wake. I completely agreed on the issues he was raising; my concern was that were other ways of achieving the desired result that would not leave him in the firing line. He left himself vulnerable and I told him so at the time: we agreed to disagree.

That I have been proved wrong in the long term, insofar as the broadcast media and press are now taking the issue very seriously in a way that they did not before, is very gratifying. It has taken a successful prosecution against a perpetrator from a separate establishment - albeit with obvious strong links to the R.N.C.M. - and the tragic suicide of one of the victims, well over eleven years for this to happen. This demonstrates how widespread this behaviour is and how difficult it is to stop something, whatever it is, once it has become part of an almost accepted M.O. However, it did leave Martin in the firing line, as is now completely public

knowledge, and it is a measure of his determination and courage that he ignored my worries and went ahead in the way he did.

Make no mistake. Very few of us would have done it, and no one else did. There were several supporters of course, and some resignations from visiting teachers, but as far as I know, no one else in a position of authority or with enough clout within the establishment to make any difference lifted a finger. And no one could possibly do anything on the basis of rumour without the authority to investigate.

I was fully aware of the series of events that had originally led to Martin's resignation eleven years ago, and of the episode that ensued - the subsequent appointment of Malcolm Layfield, and the degree to which it triggered an explosion of concern on Martin's part about the wider extent of alleged misconduct, unethical and professional behaviour, and illegal activity on the part of a wider circle of culprits - crucially outside the R.N.C.M. as well as inside it.

Thus the original reason for Martin's resignation from the R.N.C.M., which did not encompass anything illegal, expanded into a campaign against a group of teachers outside the R.N.C.M. They were very different, as they were alleged to have been abusing under-age pupils, and thus were doing something that very definitely WAS illegal.

On an emotional level, to most of us the difference between unethical behaviour towards students over the legal age limit, and the illegal abuse of under-aged children is a matter of degree only. Such behaviour may be felt to be anything from disgracefully unprofessional and immoral to perverted and extremely destructive. Thus, its inexcusability is understandably to some people on a sliding scale. I say understandably because there is no question that it is all for sure unacceptable, sordid and completely wrong. The trouble is that the difference between immoral and illegal is quite simply that you cannot withdraw or fire someone from an appointment on grounds of the former, whereas you obviously can on those of the latter.

That it should get to that point at all is for sure an ethical and moral matter on the part of the body making the appointment, but it is not a legal one and therefore not enforceable, particularly once the job has been confirmed. But it was quite obviously wrong to appoint someone with such a reputation - proven or otherwise - to a position of such responsibility, and it was quite right that Roscoe should resign over it, given that he felt so strongly about it, in a way that no one else appeared to. There are very few who would have the moral courage to do that, and it makes me feel very proud to know him that he risked his professional standing - to say nothing of his personal life and health - to try to achieve what has taken so many years to transpire.

What took place after that point was very complex, and I imagine that Martin may well have taken a different course of action in retrospect. No one in his position could possibly have anticipated the course of events, and in particular the degree to which his own reputation is alleged to have been deliberately undermined.

The press should never have been involved if the police weren't, unless they were going to seriously get to the bottom of something illegal, and they should never have initiated an exposé of the issue in the way they did. It took on the appearance of some kind of titillating entertainment in certain areas of the press; as so often happens, some of them act as if they are immune to the rules and laws that govern the rest of us, as evidenced in the Levenson

report. For a tabloid to use such phrases referring to Layfield as 'Mr. Strumpy-Pumpy' was as crass and trivialising as the way that some - including me I confess - used to privately refer to him as 'Malcolm Layastudent'. It may well have provoked titters, but it would have completely undermined any serious investigation into what he had actually done - it is one thing to gossip in private, based on substantial rumour, and quite another to print it in a nationwide newspaper, however guilty or otherwise he turned out to have been. A friend of mine saw an article about it in a newspaper published in Cyprus, so it was obviously such a good story that a version of it was syndicated internationally.

At the same time, it may well have undermined by association the reputations of several other people who had done nothing but good towards their students - to say nothing of music education as a whole. It could be argued that the degree of press trivialisation that went on at the time actually delayed any serious investigation by blurring the truth via the rumour mill.

The reputations of everyone involved, including those of the alleged victims, as well as those of the college authorities and obviously of both Layfield and Roscoe, were at stake, and nothing illegal had provably taken place. However, the apparent closing of ranks against Martin Roscoe was an extraordinary response to a perfectly reasonable stance. I can certainly understand why someone who found himself isolated by having stood his ground over a serious area of concern would take the only avenue open to him when the press began to initiate exposure of the issue. As he says quite categorically in one of his letters, he did not initiate contact with the press.

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I am fully aware of the various different angles that this overall issue has for decades been raising in both institutions.

There exist those apologists who feel that it takes two to allow an illicit relationship between a teacher and a pupil or student to take place, and that the girls involved must be either weak or ruthlessly ambitious to allow teachers to get involved with them. That, in some cases - not all by any means - is possibly true, but the job of the teacher is partly pastoral, and they should protect their pupils against their own weaknesses, rather than take advantage of them.

When all is said and done, some of them are extremely attractive. They quite often worship their teachers, and thus assume that everything they say and do is right. That plus their undoubted talent can obviously lead to a teacher regarding them with affection, and really enjoying teaching them. That is where it needs to stop. If the pupil is underage, the teacher cannot have a love affair with them - it is against the law, and can damage them for life. If they are not underage and it is a genuine love affair, the teacher needs to withdraw from teaching them - teaching and love do not mix.

But in fact, if it is genuine affection, it is another issue altogether. Here we are discussing something that has nothing to do with affection or love - whatever protestations to the contrary - it is power, and the gratification gained from it - ranging from self-satisfaction, through ego-tripping to sexual titillation, and all points in between.

To worship their teachers is of course not the best way for pupils to get a long term good result from their lessons. A cult surrounding a teacher can never be healthy. But it is often what a young people want, because to be a pupil of the cult figure validates them in their own eyes and in the minds of others. It also impresses their parents to think that their talented

offspring is a pupil of such a figure. Any teacher who demands that level of unquestionable authority is him or herself indulging in an ego-trip and weak.

They should instead encourage a lively exchange of views and bring out the best in their students - ALLOW them to develop at their own pace and to steady them when they are inclined to go down the wrong road, to respond to requests for musical or careers advice but not to force anything dogmatic. In that way the teacher can actually learn a lot from their pupils - that is certainly my experience - rather than attempting to create carbon-copies of themselves. It takes a certain type of confidence to be able to accept challenges from pupils, and to discuss them. But at least it is not abusive or illegal to encourage the opposite, as long as that is where does stop, as it obviously doesn't in some cases.

The same apologists as above may even go so far as to suggest that for the victims to wait for years and then to effectively start a snowball rolling when it is too late to prove anything is a weakness in itself. They may go even further and suggest that any depression or worse on the part of the victims also comprises a weakness. I think one has to go through abuse – sexual or otherwise - to have a clue as to what it does to one's confidence. Those of us who have not been touched by it do not have any right to pronounce on those who have. Whatever one can say about them is entirely irrelevant. There is no excuse – none at all – for what those teachers allegedly did, and to try to shift the blame onto anyone else, particularly the victim, is an abomination.

Having said that, it may be that some students exist who may exaggerate or even fabricate abuse, particularly once a snowball has started rolling. This could be motivated by a vendetta against a teacher, or by a misunderstanding. They contribute to the confusion that surrounds the whole issue, and they undermine the genuine cases. Again, the only way to deal with them is to properly investigate, deal with the results openly, and to try to ensure that no one is allowed to be in a position from which they are able to practice abuse.

I personally hardly ever teach one-on-one anyway, and I have even more rarely taught anyone under sixteen; when I have it has been at Chetham's over the last three years or so. The school has sometimes failed to supply me with an attending 'responsible adult'. This has bothered me; I have always been glad when one was there, and I am very grateful for the required windows in the teaching room doors. These things are quite rightly there for the protection of the teachers as well as the pupils, and not just boxes that need ticking. However, the window requirement didn't stop Brewer - only active intervention could have done that.

An aspect of this whole sordid culture that has not been explored so much is the question of what happens in these circumstances to the young pupils and students who refuse to cooperate with the abusers. I believe there is a tendency amongst the power brokers to penalise those who do not succumb; in professional terms and in terms of how well they do within the school or college there may well be an implied threat that those who do cooperate with the abuse will be favoured, and those who refuse may well be bullied and undermined. It is almost inevitable in fact, and may go some way towards explaining why some pupils are tempted to allow it. In addition, young people very often do not understand what is happening until it is too late, and then feel humiliated, guilty and unsupported for years - possibly for ever - and attempt to put it behind them, rather than to have to relive the abuse in front of an aggressive and combatant defence lawyer.

Certainly, for students of over eighteen years old to succumb for whatever reason it might be is a weakness on their part. They are adults, and need to develop the moral courage of their own to say no to it, to report it, and to know that it is wrong. However, weakness is not illegal - and the students are not the culprits, whatever age they are. Showing favouritism towards the weak to the detriment of the strong is at least sexual harassment. In addition it is bullying of the first order. And we must always remember that for it to happen to adult students is one thing, despicable though it is; in the case of a fourteen year old, or anyone else who has not yet left school is quite another because of the damage it does - to say nothing of the law.

There are those who feel that anyone who uses the press or the Internet to right a series of wrongs on the part of a member of the institutional establishment rather than to go directly to the institution itself or the police is out of line.

The last of these is very difficult. If the abuse is as institutionalised as it is alleged to have been in the Chetham's case, no amount of using the proper procedures will make any difference. Only bad publicity seems to have an impact.

Again, the R.N.C.M. situation is at the same time totally different and interdependent. In Roscoe's position as Head of Keyboard Studies he was part of the very institution on the verge of appointing someone he considered an inappropriate individual to another department in an equivalent position to himself. This is a very different matter to events at Chetham's, entirely because of the legal position. That there were suspicions cast on people who taught at both institutions confuses the issue because what was perpetrated by Michael Brewer at Chetham's was illegal, and what Malcolm Layfield was alleged to have done at Chetham's was not, by virtue of the age group involved. In addition, had he continued to do similar things at the R.N.C.M., it would have been with an even older group, thus not police business.

It is probably true that, with hindsight, Martin may well take a different course if he could go back. I did not expect at the time that his resignation and his making public his feelings on the matter - including via the press - would make any difference, because in purely legal terms there was no case. The R.N.C.M. had nothing to answer for, and neither did Layfield.

In ethical terms it was very different matter, and I absolutely supported him on that. Layfield definitely did have a lot to answer for, and thus the R.N.C.M. did too, but that was not for the legal system to deal with, and constituted a private matter for the institution to resolve.

That, for all the immense amount of public support Martin received, the appointment went ahead, and that over eleven years later Layfield remained in the post is testimony to the degree that, having expressed an intention to appoint him, there was no way back from that, as legally he had done nothing wrong. Even if the R.N.C.M. had wanted to pull back from the appointment in the light of these allegations, I fear that they themselves would have been vulnerable to a lawsuit. If Layfield had the impression that the job was his except for the rumours, he might well have been in a position to bring a case; I have been involved in that situation elsewhere, when I was on the selection committee for another similar appointment, and there were many possible legal issues concerning one of the applicants. In any case, that the R.N.C.M. seemed to be patently obviously wishing to go ahead regardless of rumours is an impression, not a provable fact, but whether they intended that or not, it is indeed what they did.

It seemed unlikely that the decision-makers appear not to have heard the rumours, given that almost everyone I knew in the music world of the UK had. If they genuinely didn't know of them, fair enough, but it does rather make one wonder how on earth they got into the positions they held if they could not do any better than that. If they did know of them, to consider going ahead with the Layfield appointment speaks for itself. Even if they had not heard the rumours, they were told of them by Martin Roscoe, before ratifying the appointment. That they then did nothing to change their decision is what provoked the escalation of the issue into the public domain.

Given that there was no proof of any wrong-doing - just very widespread rumour - the only correct course of action within the establishment itself was to advise the decision-making board that to appoint the successful candidate they had in mind would bring the college into disrepute, lose good potential students, and invite a potential problem in the future. Legally speaking, at that point, the responsibility lay with the institution to investigate it, report it to the police if they were sufficiently convinced that there was a case, and then leave it to the police to deal with it. The R.N.C.M. stated that they had investigated, and that nothing had emerged to prevent the appointment going ahead. Roscoe did not accept that it was any more than a whitewash.

You cannot overturn an appointment if there is no proof that the appointment breaches the law. That the college authorities should never have considered the appointment in the first place is not for anyone outside the confines of the college itself to say, unless there had indeed been a provable breach of the law. However, Roscoe was at the time, not only within the confines of the college, but also in a post that was the equivalent, in another department, of that which Malcolm Layfield was being considered. In short, a rumoured abuser of students and Roscoe were going to be working together on an equal basis within the institution. Thus he felt quite rightly that his point of view should not only be considered, but given its content plus the position he himself held at the R.N.C.M., change the appointing board's decision unanimously, and he was very surprised that it didn't. I can vouchsafe for his surprise - in fact he was gob-smacked.

Having said that, Roscoe's point was only that, with widespread rumours circulating that the individual concerned had regularly behaved unethically - as opposed to illegally, given the existing law at the time - it would be wrong on the part of the college to appoint him. It was not possible to go any further than that - neither on Martin's part, nor on the R.N.C.M.'s.

That no one in his right mind would consider appointing someone with such a reputation is a separate issue, notwithstanding the adage that there is no smoke without fire. In the present climate, there is probably quite a lot of smoke without fire in some cases, a situation that has been exacerbated by the success of those who are genuinely guilty in getting away with their abuse and having a blind eye turned.

That the R.N.C.M. authorities allegedly saw fit to ignore this reputation, to whitewash the past and not to properly investigate it, is why the issue got out of hand. Whatever the truth, the rumours were sufficient to become an issue of importance to the future reputation of the college. That they chose to ignore the issue in favour of their desire to appoint Layfield seems to be symptomatic of the wider problem amongst several educational institutions; the short term comfort of the institution is put first, at the expense of the long term future of students and pupils, to say nothing of the long term reputation of the institution itself.

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To shift the subject slightly away from the R.N.C.M. for a moment, it is why, when someone is found to be guilty of some form of abuse within a school, some schools avoid the embarrassment of having appointed that person in the first place. They do this by either denying the abuse, thereby frustrating the complaints of the abused children or students (or parents in some cases), and in effect allowing it to continue, or by having a 'quiet word' with the abuser and arranging a cover-up in exchange for a resignation, thus avoiding any police involvement.

Both responses - or lack of - create a long-term sometimes devastating and tragic effect on the lives of the abused children by denying them closure, making them feel like the culprits, and setting them up for decades of self-hatred, humiliation and depression.

The latter course not only denies closure for the abused, but also results in the abuser being able to acquire a similar post to the one he has left, given that he does not have a criminal record as a result of his crime.

Under the former circumstances, the school is as much committing abuse as the individual who perpetrates it; it makes the school authorities equally responsible and no different to those who continued to allow Jimmy Savile to work as a TV personality whilst being aware not only of what he had done, but what he was still doing.

Under the latter circumstances, the school is effectively conniving with the culprit in order to keep up appearances; the institution has dirtied its own hands by effectively saying, 'In order to maintain the reputation of this school, we are not going to admit what you did, but get off the premises and go and do it somewhere else'. If the offence is as much as circumstantially provable, they should be saying, 'That behaviour is unacceptable and illegal. You are suspended from the post, pending investigation by the police.' No cover-up, no degree of soft-soaping, and no closing of ranks against anyone attempting to expose it.

Zero tolerance is the only possible way. In that way, the abuse would go no further, the abused would have some kind of closure, and appalling tragedies such as the one that occurred recently would not take place.

Almost as a side-effect of the school doing the correct thing, people who had a tendency to commit such crimes would either not be tempted to apply for a job in the relevant school, or they would control their destructive urges. In addition, the sort of girl or boy whose inclination is to fantasise or spread malicious rumours would think twice if they thought the police would be involved.

Thus the reputation of the school would be far more impressive. That is the way of good reputations - they stem from doing the right thing, not from covering up the wrong one. And they are long-term phenomena that come from consistently doing the right thing - not just once. Sadly a good reputation is not as long-term as a bad one that comes from doing exactly the opposite - more specifically, allegedly participating in the short term cover-up and tacit acceptance of sleazy and sordid activity on the part of someone in a position of responsibility.

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With regard to events at Chetham's, whilst this was going on, what were the whole host of friends of the victims, parents and other family members, other teachers, and the pastoral

staff doing? Do we assume that none of those people knew, cared, or did anything about it for the years it was supposed to have been taking place? Of course some of them did remain blissfully unaware, partly because they were naïve and could not imagine anyone doing such things as we now know they were. But many of them must have known, otherwise the rumours would not have seeped out. These rumours reached my ears as an outsider in the form of gossip, so there is no way that large numbers of people involved in the establishment heard nothing. At the slightest sign of anything remotely suggesting that such things were going on, surely it behove anyone who worked there to act in whatever way was possible. If the school authorities were not prepared to do something, they should have gone to the police.

As a parent of a daughter myself, I know that such a thing could not have gone any further than one attempt at something inappropriate, and I would have been doing everything legally possible to prevent it happening a second time, and to get the culprit out of the job and in front of the law. And I would have done it if there was a credible complaint about it from anyone else's daughter. It is only in that way that the abused pupils can recover from it – to know that it was wrong, and that the majority, and in particular the establishment where the abuse took place, condemn it. If one doesn't do that, one is effectively in league with the culprits.

Four reasons may be assumed the protection or the turning of a blind eye to the alleged abuse that was going on:

One is that they may have been frightened for their own professional position if they spoke out; this might well be quite a realistic fear, but I think we all know what we think of other people do not have any more moral courage than that. "All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing" is Edmund Burke's best-known quotation, but he wrote many other things pertinent to this issue. I recommend his writings to those who think it is OK to stand back and let terrible things happen around them out of a desire to keep their own noses clean.

A second might be that they accepted that it was OK because that sort of thing goes on all the time. That is just another form of the first one.

The third might be that they thought the pupils were making it up or fantasising, in which case, they should have investigated it to find out for sure and cleared that particular problem up - not only for the benefit of the pupil, but also to protect the relevant members of staff.

Finally, perhaps they thought it was OK to turn a blind eye because the short term value to the school was worth more than the value of dealing with the abuse. That is what made Savile's abuse possible, and effectively they were themselves accessories to abuse – and, now that it has finally been made public, they have helped destroy the reputation of an otherwise great school.

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To return to the R.N.C.M./Roscoe matter; as I understood it, it was not Martin Roscoe's original intention to expand the issue outside the confines of the R.N.C.M.'s governing body - to make his observations public and bring into the issue the abuse of younger music students from Chetham's and other institutions. It was as a result of his discovery that the establishment seemed prepared to overlook the issue and allegedly to try to silence him by

devious means that made him go on to make a bold public statement on behalf of countless young musicians, and to fight the culture to the bitter end however long it took.

An in-house observation that the college's intention was wrong became a progressively wider issue as more and more rumoured unethical and immoral behaviour was uncovered. It eventually encompassed possible illegal activities at another establishment - one that inevitably has mutual interests with the R.N.C.M., both through sharing certain members of staff, and through large numbers of pupils from Chetham's going on to study at the R.N.C.M. It is the degree of connivance with the authorities that is always the dominant issue, and it was what motivated MR and most of his supporters; without that alleged connivance none of this needs to have happened.

The unbelievable and tragic mess that has ensued might lead to the undermining of the reputations of by far the majority of the teachers and staff at R.N.C.M. and Chetham's - to say nothing of the institutions themselves - who have the futures of their students and pupils at heart. It might even affect the nationwide reputation of musicians and music education establishments generally.

That, along with being escorted by a 'responsible adult' everywhere we need to go within a school if our C.R.B. check is not up-to-date and other P.C. features is part of the price those teachers who put their students first and always behave honourably who form the vast majority pay for the small minority who have allegedly clubbed together to make this appalling situation continue for so long. That it takes the suicide of one of the victims and the health toll it had on the one who led the vanguard against them to get people at large to do something is little different to the situation in the U.S.A. over gun law.

Thank God that some of those responsible for this culture - its perpetrators, its enablers and its apologists - are now having to face up to what they did. It may help a little way towards closure for the increasing number of victims coming forward regarding multiple abusers.

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I have thus far avoided mentioning the tragic suicide of one of the victims. I did not know her at all, and I do not wish to write anything based on inadequate knowledge. However, it is almost certainly a much more complex story than it first appears. Whatever we don't know about it, it is an appalling result of the whole episode. Those involved in the perpetration of the abuse and those who turned a blind eye to it, surely have to share some responsibility, along with the way rape victims are treated in court. We will probably never fully know why she took her own life after so many years of fighting to be heard at the very time something was finally being done.

One can only hope that nothing like this will happen again. There always were abusive teachers, like there always were abusive parents, and there always will be. But it is to be hoped that the abuse is immediately halted in future by an establishment that puts the long term future of the pupils and students, whose families have entrusted them to its trust, first. That is what they are there for, what they are being paid to do, and it is what will make it possible for them to sleep at night.

As always, if you have been, thank you for reading this.

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