

7 of 372 DOCUMENTS

The Irish Times

May 21, 2009 Thursday

Abuse raised concerns only when a threat to congregation Brutality and dire conditions in climate of fear

BYLINE: MARY MINIHAN

SECTION: IRELAND; Child Abuse Report; Pg. 10

LENGTH: 2484 words

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS:THE CHRISTIAN Brothers issued apologies that some abuse had taken place but failed to accept any congregational responsibility for such abuse, the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse reported.

The commission said the congregation engaged with it in a way which was co-operative in terms of production of documents, but defensive in the way it responded to complaints .

St Joseph s Industrial School

Artane, Dublin

Opened:1870

Status:Closed 1969

Management:Christian Brothers

SEXUAL ABUSE of boys by Brothers was a chronic problem at St Joseph s Industrial School in Artane, according to the *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse*.

Artane opened in 1870 with the aim of caring for neglected, orphaned and abandoned Catholic boys.

The Artane Boys Band, described by the commission as the public face of Artane , performed regularly at GAA fixtures in Croke Park.

The commission s report found a significant amount of predatory sexual behaviour by bigger boys on smaller, vulnerable ones .

Punishment of boys in the school is described as frequent, severe, excessive, pervasive, arbitrary and uncontrolled.

All Brothers became implicated because they did not intervene or report excesses.

One cited example of the lack of respect for the boys at management level is the humiliating practice of the inspection of underwear in public. The report said the Brothers did not understand the impact of the frightening and abusive practices used to manage and control the boys.

Abuse raised concerns only when a threat to congregation Brutality and dire conditions in climate of fear The Irish Times May 21, 2009 Thursday

Although Artane had sufficient income to provide for the boys physical needs, it failed to do so in many respects. Accommodation was generally poor and toilet facilities were described as primitive until 1953.

Facilities for preparing and serving food for the boys were also described as primitive . Clothing was poor, patched and institutional .

No effort was made to provide secondary education for boys who were capable of benefiting from it.

Although industrial training was a key objective of the system, training was only an offshoot of work that met the needs of the institution .

Poignantly, the report said: The success of the band illustrated what the boys could accomplish with proper training and adequate resources.

Participation in the band could be a positive experience for the boys involved: Boys who were part of the band fared better in Artane and afterwards.

As the band was the public face of Artane, members of the public would have been reassured when seeing the boys performing that they were receiving good care and education, but in fact the band did not represent the reality for most boys in Artane .

The report said the Department of Education pursued a policy of defending the system and institution over which it presided. The department inspected and supervised perfunctorily and neglected its obligations to the children.

Individual Brothers with a genuine calling and desire to care for and educate disadvantaged children found themselves in an institution that forced them to use methods of control that prevented the kind of care they could have given, the report concluded.

Letterfrack Industrial School

Connemara, Co Galway

Opened:1885

Status:Closed 1974

Management:Christian Brothers

THERE WAS a climate of fear in St Joseph s Industrial School in Letterfrack, Connemara, Co Galway, according to the report.

Originally, it was home to boys who were committed through the courts because they were homeless, without proper guardianship, destitute, in breach of the School Attendance Act or guilty of criminal offences. Boys could also be sent by local authorities or voluntarily admitted by parents or guardians.

In 1954 a decision was taken to restrict intake to children convicted of offences.

Letterfrack was in a remote physical location which created a very real sense of isolation . The majority of the children in Letterfrack were from Dublin and Leinster. This created obvious difficulties for families wishing to visit their children.

The report said the isolated environment led to another unforeseen problem: those people who chose to abuse boys physically and sexually were able to do so for longer periods of time, because they could escape detection and

punishment .

Violence was used to express power and status, and was practically a means of communication .

The report said the congregation did not carry out proper investigations of cases of physical abuse and did not impose sanctions on Brothers who were guilty of brutal assaults .

Protection of the boys was not a priority for the congregation and the Department of Education left supervision and control of this area entirely to local management.

On the issue of sexual abuse, the report said while it was impossible to calculate the true extent of such abuse in the institution it was clear that more abuse happened than is recorded . One Brother worked for 14 years before being detected.

The congregation did not properly investigate allegations of sexual abuse, the report found. Brothers who sexually abused boys and who were known to be a continuing danger were still permitted to work with children.

The report said the needs of victims were not considered.

Children left Letterfrack with little education and no adequate training. Boys needed extra tuition, but instead they got poor teachers and bad conditions .

The 1954 decision to restrict intake to children convicted of offences was detrimental to the welfare of the boys in Letterfrack, the report concluded.

St Joseph s Industrial School

Tralee, Co Kerry

Opened:1862

Status:Closed 1970

Management:Christian Brothers

BOYS WERE pathetically grateful for any act of kindness in St Joseph s Industrial School, Tralee, Co Kerry, the commission reported. Between 1940 and 1969 the courts committed 700 boys to Tralee because of destitution, homelessness, receiving alms and wandering , as well as improper guardianship and non-attendance at school.

As Tralee was a registered place of detention, a small number of boys were also sent there for criminal offences such as larceny, house-breaking and malicious damage. A further 122 boys were referred by the boards of health in a similar period.

The commission s report said boys recalled acts of kindness very vividly, because they stood out in a world where they were not the norm .

A former member of the congregation who visited Tralee briefly in the 1960s described the atmosphere as a secret, enclosed world, run on fear, the boys were wholly at the mercy of the staff, who seemed to have entirely negative views of them . The boys were pathetically grateful for any act of kindness.

Corporal punishment became physical abuse because of the excessive violence employed and its use as a means of control of the institution, the report found.

Physical abuse, which cannot be explained as a series of discrete cases of individual lapses , became a matter of

Abuse raised concerns only when a threat to congregation Brutality and dire conditions in climate of fear The Irish Times May 21, 2009 Thursday

concern when it threatened the interests of the congregation, but not when it endangered boys.

The report said the brutality of one Brother continued for a long time because of inept, uncaring and reckless management by the congregation and the authorities in the institutions in which he served.

A junior member of the community reported the sexual misconduct with boys of another Brother to successive superiors.

The report said the probability was that other Brothers were also aware of his behaviour, which extended over many years, and concluded that more sexual abuse could have taken place in Tralee without being reported.

Carriglea Park Industrial School

Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin

Opened:1894

Status:Closed 1954

Management:Christian Brothers

THE REPORT said violent Brothers were introduced to restore order in Carriglea Park Industrial School, Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

Boys were admitted from the age of six and, between 1940 and 1954, more than three-quarters of the boys were between nine and 12-years-old. Originally expected to be Artane on a small scale, the report said it was a far cry from its highly regimented and disciplined sister school on the north side of the city.

Measures taken to restore order in the school included the appointment of staff who had been severely criticised in other institutions for excessive physical punishment.

Transferring these Brothers to Carriglea introduced a level of violence, in the interests of order, at the expense of the boys' welfare, the report said.

When discipline became a real problem, the congregation sanctioned the appointment of men with a known propensity for excessive corporal punishment, who instilled fear in the children and the result was a more easily managed institution.

A Brother was transferred to Carriglea from Artane in 1944 about whom concern had been expressed because of his particular friendship with a boy in Artane. Such a transfer was ill-judged and dangerous, the report said.

The documentary evidence revealed that Carriglea had a serious problem with sexual activity among the boys for most of the 1940s, some of which was predatory and abusive, involving older boys with younger boys.

The Christian Brothers failed in their duty to protect the children in their care in Carriglea.

St Joseph s Industrial School

Glin, Co Limerick

Opened:1872

Status:Closed 1966

Abuse raised concerns only when a threat to congregation Brutality and dire conditions in climate of fear The Irish Times May 21, 2009 Thursday

Management:Christian Brothers

THERE WAS a severe, systematic regime of corporal punishment at St Joseph s Industrial School in Glin, Co Limerick, the commission reported.

The school was established to care for and educate neglected, orphaned and abandoned Catholic boys who were considered at risk of becoming delinquents and entering a life of crime.

According to the report, the underlying philosophy was that giving such boys a basic education and trade would make them useful citizens by preparing them for work in industry or farming .

The school opened on Sexton Street, Limerick, in 1872 and moved to west Co Limerick in 1928.

The majority of boys who were committed to Glin through the courts came from impoverished and dysfunctional backgrounds.

Some were committed for criminal offences. Brothers with a known propensity for physically abusive behaviour were sent to Glin, according to the report.

Meanwhile, the congregation transferred two Brothers to Glin despite evidence or suspicion that they had sexually abused boys in another institution under the control of the Christian Brothers.

This decision protected both the congregation and the Brothers, but endangered the boys in Glin.

Given the risk of such behaviour being repeated, it was reckless to transfer them to a residential school, where the children were particularly vulnerable as they had no recourse to their families.

The report also said there was hostility towards allowing home leave for the boys at Glin.

A letter from the resident managers to the Department of Education said: A high percentage of these children are illegitimate and their mothers are not just what they should be.

St Joseph s Industrial School

Salthill, Co Galway

Opened:1870

Status:Now a HSE -operated facility

Management:Christian Brothers until 1995

SALTHILL, ST Joseph s Industrial School in Galway, was described as dirty, cold and unhealthy in its early years, according to the commission.

Salthill was established in 1870 to take in Catholic boys who were described as neglected, orphaned and abandoned . . . in order to safeguard them from developing criminal tendencies and to prepare them for the world of industry .

Visitation reports compiled by representatives of the congregation s provincial council said the boys refectory was shabby, the buildings dilapidated and the dormitories unsuitable.

The pantry was damp and had cobwebs and the boys kitchen was outdated.

Abuse raised concerns only when a threat to congregation Brutality and dire conditions in climate of fear The Irish Times May 21, 2009 Thursday

The boys' clothes were severely criticised and their bedclothes were dirty and insufficient. Washing facilities were grossly inadequate for most of the time.

The visitation reports described Salthill in the early years as dirty, cold and unhealthy.

The education provided was described as substandard.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, management knew that there was a teacher in the school who could not write legibly on a blackboard. This teacher was responsible for the whole primary school being retarded by a full year.

When identified in 1958 by a visitor, he had already been on the staff for nearly 20 years.

One Brother who was found to have engaged in harsh and cruel treatment of boys in Letterfrack was again the subject of complaints of severity towards children in Salthill.

The report said concerns were raised about three Brothers in regard to sexual abuse while they were in Salthill. In none of the cases was the abuse addressed other than as a practical problem for the congregation.

St Joseph's School for Deaf Boys

Cabra, Dublin

Opened:1857

Status:Under trusteeship of Catholic Institute for Deaf People

Management:Christian Brothers until 2000

THE FORMER management at St Joseph's School for Deaf Boys in Cabra, Dublin, failed to protect children from sexual abuse by staff, the commission found.

The commission described Cabra as a well-equipped school that promised the best possible care and education to boys who were deaf or who had hearing difficulties. Cabra did not deliver on its promises, the report found.

The school opened in 1857 and the Christian Brothers managed it until 2000. Today the school is under the trusteeship of the Catholic Institute for Deaf People.

The report said Cabra failed to provide a safe or secure environment for the children it purported to protect.

The management in Cabra failed to protect children from sexual abuse by staff.

When complaints were made, they were not believed, ignored or dealt with inadequately. The level and extent of abuse perpetrated by one lay worker, as late as the 1990s, was an indication of the lack of any proper safeguards.

The report said there was a failure on the part of management to recognise that children with special needs demanded a high standard of care, and that all staff needed to be informed and trained appropriately.

Children were fearful and helpless in the face of management failure to put controls in place.

Corporal punishment, at times excessive, took place at the school as late as the mid-1990s despite the ban in place since 1982.

It is particularly regrettable that this form of punishment was used on children with disability, who should have been treated with kindness and consideration.

Abuse raised concerns only when a threat to congregation Brutality and dire conditions in climate of fear The Irish Times May 21, 2009 Thursday

The level of peer abuse uncovered by the health board investigation in the mid-1990s was described as disturbing .

The investigation also revealed a pattern of physical and emotional bullying that made Cabra a very frightening place for children who were learning to overcome hearing difficulties.

The report said that the provision of good facilities was no substitute for an environment that protected and cherished the individual child.

Swimming pools and recreation halls are of little value if children are frightened, bullied and abused.

LOAD-DATE: May 21, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2009 The Irish Times
All Rights Reserved