

Witness Name: Margaret Allred

Exhibits: 8

Dated: 18/08/2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARGARET ALLRED FORMER HIGH SUPPORT TEACHER OF ACORNS SCHOOL LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Margaret Allred, will say as follows:

Background

1. I make this statement in response to a request by the Inquiry Legal Team dated 6 August 2025 in connection with my previous role as High Support Teacher at Acorns School.
2. I have previously provided an account to the police dated 25 November 2024 which I attach as [Exhibit MA1/MERP000786]. Having reviewed this statement, it remains true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. However, at the time of providing that statement I did not have access to any of my records and the statement was provided purely from memory. I make this statement having had an opportunity to review the following documents:
 - Exhibit MA2/LCC001346: AR's CPOMs records
 - Exhibit MA3/LCC001345 and Exhibit MA4/LCC001580: Chronologies prepared by Joanne Hodson, Acorns
 - Exhibit MA5/LCC000707: AR Risk Assessment Profile
 - Exhibit MA6/LCC001526: email chain dated 9 February 2021
 - Exhibit MA7/ LCC000455: Prevent Referral dated 1 February 2021
 - Exhibit MA8/ **LCC001400** : Prevent Referral dated 22 April 2021

3. In 2020 I was a High Support Teacher at Acorns School. I was first asked to teach AR on a one-to-one basis in July 2020 after the Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed. This was the first time I had any interaction with AR. I continued to teach him until he stopped attending the Acorns School.

4. I have 27 years of experience teaching in Special Educational Needs (SEN) backgrounds. I qualified in 1997 (previously an educational countryside warden for 3 years) and worked in a middle school in Wakefield teaching Year 5 and Year 6 mainstream primary children. I then moved into SEN at a residential school for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties for 3 years. I then had 5 years in the independent sector teaching Year 3 – Year 6 primary pupils. I then moved to an outstanding SEN school within Leeds NE SILC for 2 years teaching complex pupils and in a 16+ provision. I then did 2 years at an SEN school in York before returning to the Leeds NE SILC provision teaching complex pupils. I moved to Lancashire and started working at Acorns from 2014 to May 2022. I then moved back into the independent sector after being offered a post to set up a new primary base for pupils with complex behavioural needs: SEMH, ASD and ADHD. More recently since Feb 2024 I have taken on the role of family liaison officer at the same school.

AR's History at Acorns

5. Having consulted the chronologies prepared by Acorns, I began teaching AR in July 2020. He had been enrolled at Acorns School for some time, but this was the first time I had met him.

6. I have been asked what I knew about the following events which were recorded by staff in AR's CPOMs records prior to July 2020:
 - 15 November 2019: *"During ICT lesson today I found AR searching school shootings in America. When I told him to stop and get on with his work he tried to engage in a conversation about the subject but was told this was not going to happen. I have been told that we can no longer log student web history."* [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.71]

- 29 November 2019: *“At the start of the lesson AR refused to sit down and opted for walking up and down near his seat punching his hand hard. He was told to stop as he would hurt himself. He then sat down and started to work with SM very reluctantly. SM was trying to give him ideas how to promote his business and one suggestion was to tell people that his business was new to the area. He insisted that this would not be good because people would think he would kill them as they did not know him. He said that people don't trust others they don't know in case they get murdered. He was regularly out of his seat and then he walked to the highest part of the ceiling, jumped up and punched a laminate hanging from it very hard”.* [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.71]
- 3 December 2019: *“Within Art lesson, working with oil pastels colouring in Call of duty images. AR commented saying "Why can we have these with guns but cant look at guns on the Internet" and then said "can we have a picture of a severed head then", Mr Baker replied, this is not appropriate and changed the subject and explained that Art can be drawn with different topics such as still life which looks at the body form. He then tried to mention the topic again and I told him that everything you say is recorded and that the images have been allowed by Miss Cutts.”* [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.71]
- 4 December 2019: *“AR said 'SM is a sexist, she made a joke about men at work'. AR then said 'she is a homophobic as she was drinking out of a 'mrs' cup and shouted when we asked was she a lesbian'. AR then said 'she is a racist as well she said Coon earlier. She actually said to me AR you are a coon'.”* [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.69]:
- 11 December 2019: incident at the Range High School where AR assaulted another pupil with a hockey stick and was found to be in possession of a knife. [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.63-64]:

7. I did not have access to any documents relating to AR before teaching him, other than his Pupil Risk Assessment. Teachers would not have access to a pupil's full CPOMs records, which are confidential. This is not unusual and in my experience is consistent with other schools and safeguarding procedures. The

way CPOMs works is that the teacher can submit a concern, which is then added to the overall record and flagged to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for review. However, once a teacher has submitted the concern, they can no longer see it. The DSL has access to the full record and would relay information to teachers as they felt necessary either verbally or by email.

8. I did have a general understanding of AR's history and concerns about him, including accessing inappropriate material on the internet and taking knives to school. This was shared with me by either Joanne Hodson (the Deputy Headteacher) or Janet Lewis (the DSL) through verbal discussions. I would not have been aware of the specifics of each incident, as I did not see the CPOMs records.
9. I can recall discussing the incident at the Range High School on 11 December 2019 in more detail with either Joanne or Janet. I was aware that he had attended his previous school with the intention of harming a student who he felt had bullied him in the past, that on being unable to find that student he attacked another student seemingly at random, with a hockey stick, and then a staff member and that he had been in possession of a knife. It was clear to me from this incident that AR was a high-risk child given the degree of pre-planning that had gone into this incident which appeared vengeful in nature. He had the confidence to enter a fully staffed school building during the school day after being excluded from there.

Personal Involvement with AR

10. During the Covid-19 lockdown, Joanne Hodson approached me about teaching AR outside the classroom. He was considered to be a risk to himself and possibly to others due to the assault at the Range High School, which he had pre-planned. My recollection is that other staff were reluctant to teach him. Given my experience in teaching high risk pupils in SEN settings, I was happy to teach him with appropriate reassurances from Joanne; there was no pressure on me to teach him. The risks AR potentially posed to teachers were more manageable as we are trained to de-escalate and re-engage. If I had felt it was not safe for me to teach him, I would have stopped and Joanne would have supported me.

11. It was decided that I should initially teach AR on a two-to-one basis. This was because I did not know him yet and it would not have been appropriate for me to teach him on a one-to-one basis without having built a rapport with him. This also helped with managing any risk. Initially, Janet Lewis would sit in on AR's lessons. Once we had done a few sessions and built a rapport we reduced the sessions to one-to-one which I was happy with, and the door was kept open with staff nearby.
12. On meeting AR, it was clear that he was very complex. He was academically able and very articulate but his social and emotional needs were high. I think it is likely that outside of an SEN setting, his academic ability and the way he communicated may have caused people to misread him and miss his social needs. AR could be closed off and had a low emotional response. My sense was that he wanted to be able to read social behaviour but struggled with it. I believe his understanding of non-verbal language was very limited. He did not easily form personal connections. He was also very secretive and could be indifferent to professional roles and social structures. He was egocentric and very controlling, which made it difficult to engage him in useful dialogue about appropriate social behaviour.
13. As a Pupil Referral Unit, we were used to dealing with children with challenging needs. However, AR was more unusual than the children we would usually teach by virtue of his academic ability and egocentric personality, combined with his severe social isolation and lack of contrition about the incident at the Range High School.
14. It is worth mentioning that AR's family background was also quite unusual and unique. It seemed that they were distrustful of other professionals' judgements based on comments they made in meetings and comments made by other teachers. My understanding was that his father had been involved in the conflict in Rwanda. This kind of trauma can have an intergenerational impact on children in a way that is not fully understood, which requires support. I recall AR being very interested in history, wars, and genocide.
15. AR's father did not seem to fully understand AR's antisocial behaviour and perceived him as a victim and at first felt returning him to mainstream education

would be the best place for him. In my view AR's father had similar needs to AR and used dominant, articulate conversation to shut down discussions when he disagreed with professional judgements. A good example of this is the email sent to Jane Eccleston on 27th April 2021.

16. My goal was to build a relationship with him and manage his social and emotional needs through my teaching. Being honest, trustworthy and providing support as well as clear guidance about pro social behaviour is a big part in preventing criminality and this is how I worked with AR. You need to take time to build trust in order to challenge behaviour. We used personalised learning which is detailed teaching and assessing rather than an inflexible structured timetable. This was due to his limited willingness or ability to engage with formal learning.
17. During the period I taught AR I did feel I saw an improvement in him. Initially he was very shutdown and reluctant to engage. We were able to get him back into academic learning. He engaged in his GCSE's and felt pride in his achievements. After 4 months I was able to directly discuss more appropriate social behaviour, and I used social stories to illustrate how to go about using better social options. We discussed his plans for the future, which indicated that the risk of anti-social behaviour was reducing as he was planning his own positive future. As our lessons progressed, he was not confrontational, he listened to my expectations, and I felt that the overall risk was reducing. My understanding was that because he had completed his work with YOT and had been referred to Prevent they would have been monitoring his risk outside school.
18. One thing that often helps a child reform is respect for societal structures. It is important that one-to-one high support tuition is only for a limited time, as this can compound social isolation and feed into egocentricity. Unfortunately, we never managed to integrate AR back into a group although we tried more than once. Every time we moved him into a class he was controlling, argumentative and disruptive. His college placement was an excellent opportunity to reintegrate him back into groups. As college is a different more relaxed environment I felt very positive about this opportunity.

19. Given my role I have a lot of experience in recording safeguarding issues. I would record anything that caused me concern from a safeguarding perspective in the CPOMs records. The decision about making a Prevent referral would ultimately be down to the Head Teacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. I felt everyone at Acorns took the risks very seriously.
20. I have been asked to comment on the following events which were recorded in AR's CPOMs records:

1 February 2021

21. On 1 February 2021 an email was received from David Cregan, the DSL at the Range High School. The email is recorded in the CPOMs records as follows: "*I hope this email finds you well. I am not sure if either of you are involved with [AR] anymore but, if you are, I just wanted to draw the 2 attachments copied from [AR]'s Instagram account to your attention. He appears to still be in contact with some pupils from our school, one of whom brought this to our attention. Although there is nothing strikingly dangerous in this message, it contains some details regarding Colonel Gadaffi, which might raise some potential radicalisation concerns, particularly if [AR] has been posting, or discussing other similar material. Please let me know if you are still involved with [AR] and the contact details of his current school and support worker, if you are not.*" [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.44]:
22. I recall that Joanne shared this with me verbally, as I did not have access to the CPOMs records. I was aware that she was making a referral to Prevent but I did not see it. The first time I saw the referral was when it was provided to me for the purposes of preparing this statement. In my experience this is not unusual as it falls under the remit of the DSL, and as AR's teacher I was kept informed.

21 April 2021

23. On 21 April 2021 I updated the CPOMs records as follows: "*The day before [AR] was allowed access to the school computer for the first time in a long time (after issues in school last year) and Mrs Allred clearly explained that [AR] must not go on games or webpages that could be disturbing or offensive and to treat the*

computer as a public place like a library computer. [AR] agreed and used the computer with no issues that day. [AR] was using the computer to look at his English work (BBC bitesize). As Mrs Allred came closer to the screen and she noticed 2 other web pages were open with the words "London Bridge". At no point had Mrs Allred seen him look at these pages. [AR] quickly closed them before anything else could be seen. Mrs Allred asked what [AR] had been looking at. He said he was reading the news about the recent bomb that had been planted on London Bridge and he was reading the news. Mrs Allred asked [AR] what he knew about it and [AR] spoke in detail about the IRA, how it began and the "occupation" of Northern Ireland in the 1600's by the British and that is what started the conflict in Northern Ireland. Mrs Allred said she is pleased he is interested in history and global politics as long as he is looking at reliable websites as there are a lot of sites that say inaccurate things and he needs to get a balanced view. [AR] said he understood, and he said he reads the Guardian. [AR] then went onto to talk in great detail about the conflict between Israel and Palestine and his views on this and that some reasons for the conflict are justified in his opinion. He said that the MI5 have been asked to kill people in the IRA and Mrs Allred said it is unlikely and [AR] clarified the news said that the MI5 had been asked to "take them out" which Mrs Allred clarified is different. [AR] said there are always two sides to a story. Mrs Allred said that it is important that [AR] isn't being influenced by anyone to believe an ideal and asked if he understood about radicalisation. Mrs Allred said if he is ever speaking to someone who says they have all the answers and to not trust anybody but them then that is not safe. Mrs Allred reminded [AR] to make safe choices and not do anything that promotes violence in any way as he knows what the consequences of that are. [AR] made no comment but nodded as though he understood. Mrs Allred asked would he be interested in a job as a journalist and [AR] said no. It was clear by [AR]'s conversation he had read a lot about the history and current politics of these conflicts and had formed strong opinions about what was right. His conversation was animated and passionate as though these topics are of great interest to him." [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.41-42]:

24. I was asked about this incident during my police interview and gave the following account: "I have been asked if I recall an incident around 22/04/2021 regarding [AR] researching London Bridge. I do remember this incident. It took place in an Acorn Classroom, and I was on with Axel who was working on a computer.

Always used to keep his computer screen in my views I could see what he was doing in the lesson. I remember looking at his computer screen and seeing an internet page about the London Bridge Terror Attack. He opened the page then hid it quickly behind another browser tab. I told him that he needed to close the webpage down, which he then did. I don't recall specifically what he said about it, but I recognised professionally that it was a safeguarding concern. I dealt with it by speaking to [AR] and giving him feedback about how it wasn't appropriate. I then spoke to the headteacher about what had happened and then logged the incident on [AR]'s safeguarding record. It was an obvious concern for me, and something that wasn't appropriate for the classroom. It was in no way part of the lesson, and I was aware of the risk. I don't recall who made the referral to Prevent about the concern, but I think it was done on my behalf by either the headteacher or the safeguarding lead for the school." [Exhibit MA1/MERP000786]

25. I can recall this incident. AR's use of the internet at school was being very closely supervised. I was aware of concerns about him accessing inappropriate material previously at school and at home, which had triggered Prevent referrals. I had assumed his internet usage at home was being monitored as a result of those referrals. At school I would keep an eye on his screen but he was very secretive. My recollection is that I had turned my back, and he had quickly switched between tabs. I cannot remember now if we completely stopped using computers when teaching AR after this incident. We certainly started to use paper wherever possible. I will expand on internet usage later in this statement.

26. Having reviewed the entries, I do not have anything else to add in respect of my recollection of this incident. I would always put as much detail as possible into the CPOMs records to enable the DSL to consider what to do next. I was aware that the DSL ultimately made a referral to Prevent as a result of this incident, but as with the other referral I did not see it and cannot comment on this any further.

23 April 2021

27. On 23 April 2021 I updated the CPOMs record as follows: *"On arrival to his lesson [AR] sat down and asked why he had been referred to -he couldn't remember the name. Mrs Allred said "Prevent" and [AR] said yes that's right. Mrs*

Allred explained that "it comes under safeguarding and I had spoken to someone as I wasn't sure if I needed to do anything and I was told it was passed on". [AR] accepted this with no issues. Mrs Allred explained that Prevent know a lot about conflict in the world and just needed to check that he isn't involved in anything that would cause violence -which is safeguarding. Mrs Allred explained that sometimes people can say things that they don't mean to cause violence but then that can still happen and Prevent understand about that best. Mrs Allred said he is not in trouble; just checking that he is safe. [AR] said that he thought this was "human error" and that it was only because he had talked about Israel if it had been about South Africa that wouldn't have happened. Mrs Allred corrected him and said it can be any situation where there may be risks and recounted other examples such as hate crime. Mrs Allred said it is not about Nationalism but about keeping people safe. [AR] seemed to understand this and nodded when Mrs Allred referred to preventing violence. Mrs Allred encouraged him to talk about these issues and what he believes as part of school is understanding what you think about things and the debate is good and my (Mrs Allred's) job is to ensure he gets a balanced view. [AR] went on to talk about the documentation he had seen provided to his dad by school. He said that he had seen some of it and disagreed with it -he said that the word "controlling" was used and he disagreed with it as he felt he was the least controlling person in the school. Mrs Allred said she felt she understood what he meant as he didn't bother anyone else and he came in and did his work. [AR] said it didn't read right and made him sound like a psychopath. Mrs Allred said it could be because of his ASD diagnosis and said that she would look into it. Mrs Allred said that schools are similar to hospitals that they have lots of confidential information about you and you can request to see the information which is why his dad has the information. Mrs Allred said that it is a difficult time in his life because of everything that has happened. He has lots of adults involved in his life: just when he doesn't want adults getting involved. [AR] had his head on the desk. The discussion lasted until near the end of the lesson and Mrs Allred asked did he want to play a game (of backgammon) and he said yes and the lesson ended positively." [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.41]

28. I was asked about this during my police interview and gave the following account:
"I have also been asked if I recall a further incident that followed on from this on 23/04/2021 in which it was recorded that [AR] was concerned the Prevent referral

made him “look like a psychopath”. I don’t remember this is any great detail, other than the language of “make me look like a psychopath”. I do recall [AR] saying this at another time regarding paperwork written about him at a similar time. We discussed the paperwork in detail and rewrote it together so it still clearly showed any risks and needs and he understood what the paperwork meant.” [Exhibit MA1/MERP000786]

29. The discussion between us reflected in the CPOMs entry was part of relationship building and appealing to AR’s humanity. I was not in any way condoning his behaviour. My role was to develop a relationship of trust with him so that he could reflect on his antisocial behaviour, by talking to him about it to de-escalate it. Part of the training for Prevent is that you should not shame or blame this behaviour as it can encourage self-radicalisation and secrecy, and encourage the child to hide their behaviour.
30. My recollection is that the paperwork was a High Support Tuition document. This document sets out a pupil’s education needs to assist educational practitioners with teaching, rather than issues relating to safeguarding or risk. It sets out things like what the pupil’s barriers and motivators to learning are, what their needs are and a termly summary of work completed. These documents are sometimes shared with parents but would not usually be shared with students. In this case, it had been agreed that AR’s parents could see it. It was never intended that AR would see it, but his parents must have shared it with him. He approached me about something I had written in it, but I cannot recall now exactly what it related to. He was unhappy with the way it had been phrased. At that point, I felt it had caused harm to him and started to erode the trust between us (as discussed in emails sent by me on 3 September 20 21 and 13 September 2021 in chronology prepared by Acorns). I explained why the document had not been shared with him originally as he was a child and if he was an adult I would have shown him it and we talked about what I had written. My overall recollection was that whatever I had said was factually accurate but could have been phrased in a different way. We discussed it and changed it so that it had exactly the same information but was written in a way that he understood and agreed with it by rephrasing the information and I ensured he understood it. This helped to keep the trust between us and discuss and work on his behaviour in a meaningful way. I would only have rephrased and would not have omitted anything. Anything of concern would have been reflected in his Pupil Risk

Assessment, which was not accessible by him and nothing would be altered within that. This difficulty indicated his complexity: that he was intellectually able to easily interpret what was written, but lacked any understanding or contrition regarding his anti-social behaviour which was indicated in his barriers to learning within the document.

17 May 2021

31. On 17 May 2021 the following entry was uploaded to CPOMs by Joanne Hodson, but it is signed at the bottom by me: *"[AR] has just shared with me: [AR] tells me that yesterday he was talking to his dad about the cooking in the house -generally how his dad doesn't cook. Dad said you can go to a children's home but it's not nice there. You will get treated really badly there. He has said this before, and it makes me really angry. I threw juice at him. Normally I warn him if I am going to do this - it was a smoothie. [AR] said that Dad he was taking pictures and videos of the juice and himself (as the juice landed on him) as a record for the police. [AR] said to his dad that he (dad) used to hit him (AR) and that was worse. He used to hit me when I was younger. I think he is now scared to hit me. [AR's] dad said this can't carry on. [AR] was angry that his dad denied hitting him and that he was making out that he was the victim, so [AR] hit him in the head -on the top of his head. Dad said you are really violent and dangerous. If you do what you do to me other people will kill you. [AR] said he would tell school on Monday and Dad said okay, I will delete the photos and videos if you don't say anything. [AR] asked him why he had taken pictures and videos and his dad said because he thought he might call the police. This was recounted to me by [AR] during the lesson. [AR] read this typed up account to check it was all accurate. Mrs Hodson came in to listen to [AR] and read the account. Mrs Hodson said we are not going to react to this but respond and we need time to think about it. Mrs Hodson asked does [AR] feel safe at home and [AR] said yes. Mrs Allred encouraged [AR] to speak to his mum."*

32. Later the same day I made the following entry on CPOMs: *"Mrs Allred rang dad to recount [AR's] disclosure given to Mrs Allred and Mrs Hodson earlier today. Mrs Allred said that [AR] had told us that he (AR) had an argument about cooking and had thrown juice on him (Dad) and hit him (AR hit Dad) on the head. Dad said he doesn't know why [AR] is saying this as everything is fine at home and*

there isn't a problem. Dad said [AR] likes to talk to other adults and finds it easier to talk to other adults. Dad said that [AR] is trying to find his identity. Dad said it is very difficult working with an institution like Acorns as nothing is normal. Mrs Allred offered support and explained she rang as [AR] has told us this and as his Dad he does need to know. Mrs Allred asked if he was okay and Dad said they are fine. Mrs Allred offered an early help referral if he wished and Dad said we do not need any referrals. Mrs Allred asked Dad to please get in touch with school if he needs support or changes his mind in the future."

33. I know I spoke to AR's father about this, but I cannot remember the exact details. I would have spoken to Janet as the DSL before doing so. I would have logged the conversation as fully as possible in the CPOMs records in order for the DSL to consider whether to proceed with a safeguarding referral or any other measure. I can't recall any other similar concerns being raised and it is not unusual for one off incidents not to be escalated if both the parent and the child say they have no concerns and they are okay. In this excerpt AR's father refers to the difficulty of working with Acorns as nothing is "normal" indicating his wish to not be in a specialist provision and possibly indicating his belief that the environment was a causal factor in AR's behaviour, rather than preventative factor.

21 January 2022

34. On 21 January 2022 I made the following entry on CPOMs: *"[AR] asked Mrs Allred if she had heard what Rishi Sunak (politician) had said about Jews that is was supposed to anti-semitic but he (AR) didn't think that it was. [AR] said that why is it that everyone knows about the Jewish Holocaust but no-one talks about the other genocides in the world. [AR] said it is not right that only the Jewish people should be talked about and they do sometimes have a lot of money that is true. [AR] said he believed the British government knew about the holocaust but didn't do anything about it and the government is not as good as you think it is. Mrs Allred challenged this thinking and said it is wrong to single out any group and genocide is wrong whatever the group of people and it is also wrong to imply that sharing the Jewish viewpoint of the Holocaust is somehow wrong and the government could not get to where it was happening for a long time-it is really*

important we learn and understand what has happened." [Exhibit

MA2/LCC001346/ Page12

35. I was asked about this during my police interview and gave the following account:
"Regarding an incident dated 21/01/2022, and a report about [AR] making comments about the Holocaust, Jewish people and genocide – I don't remember anything specifically. [AR] would have been Year 11 at this point, and if he had said anything of that nature to me, then I would have recorded it accurately in his safeguarding record. [AR] did used to talk about politics generally and I do remember discussing genocides with him and him agreeing that they are wrong. I don't recall anything discussed outside of this context, but I would point to the school records I kept as an accurate record. At no point did I discuss Rwanda with him or anything to do with his family history". [Exhibit MA1/MERP000786]
36. I do not have anything to add over and above what is recorded on CPOMs and in my police statement. I was concerned by AR's comments which is why I raised a concern on CPOMs. However, there was never a consistent rhetoric with AR following a consistent viewpoint. I could not see him forming a very clear ideology of any kind. It was more that he had a general disaffection with society and school, which we were trying to repair.

25 January 2022

37. On 25 January 2022 I made the following entry on CPOMs: *[AR] was speaking a lot today in his lesson with Mrs Allred about politics and raising issues around the death of Lady Diana, how waters were poisoned that aborigines use, how wealthy countries are only peaceful because they have stolen from other countries. Mrs Allred asked that [AR] check that his sources are reliable and it is important that he does not use this information to promote hate or violence and he said sometimes violence is necessary that is the only way that creates change. Mrs Allred disagreed and said Mandela and Ghandi and [AR] dismissed this making negative comments about them. Mrs Allred said I would not want you to be involved in hate or violence and [AR] said no he wouldn't. Mrs Allred said that as he is now may be going to Presfield we need to come up with a plan to make sure he only talks politics at set times and not during the lesson and [AR] understood he would be interrupting the lesson and he said this is what he used*

to do in the Range. ACTION create a social story around appropriate conversation at the right times.” [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.12]

38. I gave the following account to the police: *“I have also been asked about an incident dated 25/01/2022 regarding AR commenting about death and water poisoning. I don’t recall anything at all about this. However, if I was in someway involved in an incident in which AR made comments about this, then my name would be against such a record on his safeguarding log. Again, I would point to such records as an accurate record of what happened, albeit I have no memory of this specifically.” [Exhibit MA1/MERP000786]*

39. I cannot recall this incident in detail so I am reliant on the CPOMs entry. I must have had concerns about it because I logged it on CPOMs.

40. In general, during these discussions I felt that I was encouraging a balance view whilst continuing to build a relationship of trust with AR. AR did not have any incidents of violence or reoffending while I was teaching him. At the time I felt this was because we were making progress and he knew he was accountable for his actions in a school setting. His comments at the time about not wanting to be involved in violence were appropriate responses. Looking back, it is possible that he was disassociated and not connecting his actions, was in denial or was being deliberately deceitful about his true feelings and planned actions.

23 February 2022

41. On 23 February 2022 I made the following entry on CPOMs: *“AR talked for the first 10 minutes of the lesson and then started work but refused to do any more after 20 minutes and started pacing the room. He was talking about global politics and how governments don’t stop genocide but they could if they wanted to and how Jewish people always seem to be in positions of power. Mrs Allred addressed this by saying the situation is always complicated and there are people and organisations that will campaign against war and support those affected by war if he wanted to explore that. AR was challenged about his views on Jewish people that it is not right to single out any group as that is how hate crime can be caused and he needs to be aware of the impact of his views. Mrs Allred addressed the fact he talked so much that he was unable to do his work and we must complete the mock exams. As it was his first day back today we*

agreed it hadn't gone well. AR agreed that from tomorrow he will do his work and if he manages this, he can talk for the last 15 minutes of the lesson.” [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.10]

42. I gave the following account to the police]: *“I have been asked about an incident dated 23/02/2022 concerning Jewish people and comments [AR] made. I do remember [AR] having a conversation with me and him alleging that Jewish people have lots of money. I remember me telling him that this viewpoint wasn't okay and that it was unrealistic. I also recall we spoke about hate crimes and what this meant. I didn't think however he was anti-Semitic in any context as I did not hear further comments. I don't remember anything specifically about Governments not stopping genocides”.* [Exhibit MA1/MERP000786]

43. I cannot recall this incident but looking at the CPOMs entry we had a discussion about his views on Jewish people. Whenever a child raises issues like these, there is always a dilemma between shutting the conversation down entirely or trying to reframe it as you are in the middle of a lesson. When having these discussions with AR I felt it was important to keep a dialogue and lead back into an educational context to keep the learning as a focus. I wanted to reframe these discussions so that they lead back to a balanced, informed view which did not promote violence.

17 March 2022

44. On 17 March 2022 Acorns received information that AR had been reported missing by his mother and was later located by police having refused to pay for a bus. The report stated that he was found with a small kitchen knife and was planning on stabbing someone. The report also made reference to AR having previously tried to make poison [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.4-5.]. I was not asked about this incident during my police interview.

45. Following this incident I sent an email to AR's CAHMS worker, Sam Steed, to ask how a recent meeting with AR had gone and what had caused him to act in this way. I asked for as much information as possible to update the safeguarding and risk assessments. In the email, I referred to a conversation I had had with Presfield school about the incident and suggested that CAHMS also update

them. Sam responded to say that AR had engaged in the session well but he did not want to return to Acorns and was looking forward attending Presfield. I forwarded the email to Hayley Dawson, the Head of Sixth Form at Presfield [Exhibit MA2/LCC001346/pg.3].

46. I would not have had access to the CPOMs entries regarding this referral or the police report, but I do recall being told about this verbally. I think Joanne Hodson discussed it with me. I knew that the police were involved and assumed they would be dealing with it appropriately. By this time, I was no longer teaching AR and he was due to transfer to Presfield. I felt it was important that they knew this information so I forwarded the email and spoke to someone at Presfield about this. It was a woman in the Senior Leadership Team. Looking at the email, it might have been Hayley Dawson. I explained that I felt that the incident might have been triggered due to a gap in his engagement. When I was teaching him, he had a consistent person watching him who he was accountable to. AR needed to build a relationship with an adult he respected and between me ceasing to teach him and him arriving at Presfield, he did not have this.

Internet Usage

47. Teachers do receive training usually online about safe internet use for both pupils and staff and we are given up to date information about online risks in order to monitor pupil's safe use of the internet. As I have set out earlier in this statement, I closely monitored AR's use of the internet in the period I was teaching him. My recollection is that it was difficult to monitor his internet usage at school other than physically supervising it. Most local authority schools do not have the funding for technology to monitor this. I work at an independent school where searching certain terms will trigger an automatic notification to the DSL in real time, and the DSL can remotely monitor what a pupil is looking at on their own screen.
48. I assumed that AR's use of the internet at home had been monitored by the police in light of the Prevent referrals. I cannot recall AR's parents ever raising a concern about him accessing inappropriate material at home. In my experience Social Services and Early Help provide more hands on support around online safety as they have more direct contact with children in the home.

Prevent Referrals

49. During my period of involvement with AR, Acorns made two Prevent referrals on 1 February 2021 and 22 April 2021. These referrals were made by Janet Lewis, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, based on information I had provided in the CPOMs records and in discussion with her. As set out earlier in this statement, I did not see either of these referrals but this is not unusual.
50. On 9 February 2021 Counter Terror Policing North West (“CTPNW”) contacted Acorns to ask whether the school had any further concerns other than the information from the Range School in relation to Instagram posts MA6/LCC001526]. This was the subject matter of the second Prevent referral on 1 February 2021.
51. On 9 February 2021 responded to Joanne Hodson and Janet Lewis stating *“I am concerned as I think he may not be active, but he could easily be radicalised and would be a huge risk if this happened - the risk would be very real of harm to others”*.
52. In stating that I did not think AR was “active” but could be easily radicalised, I was trying to convey that whilst I thought the educational intervention was successful, he could be radicalised online at home. In hindsight he was probably already self-radicalising without following a specific ideology. I was trying to be fair as he may not have been active.
53. Janet responded by saying “Maggie – first rule of safeguarding: Don’t assume there is an issue until there is one! We can only refer on what we see not what we fear or assume!”. Janet was essentially saying that you cannot refer someone just on a feeling that they might do something. I can understand this. I had no evidence for this other than AR’s comments and history, it was just a feeling. Janet also sent another email at the same time reassuring me that PC Carmen Thompson was looking into the information and “doing the legwork” to see if there were any concerns. Janet’s response was reasonable as I assumed police would have checked for evidence.

54. I am not sure if my email was passed on to CTPNW. This would have been Janet's decision as the DSL. DSL's receive much more training about making Prevent referrals and communicating with CTPNW. If I felt strongly that action was not being taken when it should be then I would have done something and contacted LADO, but I trusted Janet's judgement and experience.

Risk Assessments

55. In preparing this statement I have been provided with a copy of AR's Risk Assessment Profile [Exhibit MA5/LCC000707]. The first page indicates that this document had been updated in November 2019, December 2019, July 2020, November 2020, April 2021 and February 2021. The updates in November 2020, April 2021 and February 2022 appear to have been updated by me which is reflected by my initials.

56. I will summarise the risks outlined in this document as follows:

- "Aggression to peers": it was recorded that AR alleged being targeted by other pupils and could respond aggressively. I updated this risk to note that AR's referral to Acorns came about after he informed Childline that he was carrying a knife to school with the intention of harming another learner.
- "Violent to peers": this entry is similar to "Aggression to peers" but I updated this to include the fact that AR had visited the Range High School to find a learn who had bullied him and instead assaulted a learner who was not connected to the event and a member of staff. He was charged with assault and completed a community order with the Youth Offending Team (YOT). I also included that in January 2022 AR had said he would hit a peer at his new school if they would not respect of agree with his political viewpoint.
- "Aggressive to staff": it was noted that AR had previously made aggressive comments towards staff such as *"that's why teachers get murdered"*.

- “Aggressive to parents”: it was noted that AR could be argumentative with his parents. I updated the records to reflect that during a TAF meeting in December 2021 AR had reportedly said that he would hit his father because that is what his father had taught him. AR was told during the meeting this was not acceptable and AR was reminded his father had been told the same. I also recorded that the police had attended the family home in November/December 2021 due to aggressive outbursts.
- “Violent to parents”: I recorded that a referral had been made through YOT due to disclosure from AR that he had been hit by dad. This was investigated by Social Services and closed.
- “Parents unable to exercise control”: it was noted that the family had received Early Help intervention providing parenting advice and courses and that AR’s father had been very positive about advice given.
- “Attendance problems”: it was noted that from July 2021 AR had refused to attend for different reasons and was unhappy with the school placement.
- “Self-harm”: I recorded a risk of self-harm after AR made a referral to attempting suicide after CAMHS would not give him medication for anxiety. I passed this on to AR’s father and raised it in a multiagency meeting on 19 December 2021.
- “Police involvement”: it was noted that AR had been permanently excluded from his previous mainstream school after taking a knife into school on more than 10 occasions and that paperwork received from the police stated AR should be searched and that they regarded the incident as “high risk”.
- “Convictions”: AR’s community order following the incident at the Range High School was noted.

- “Use of weapons”: this reiterated AR’s history of taking knives to school and paperwork from the police which suggested AR’s mother was having to hide kitchen knives.
- “Mental Health problems”: it was noted that AR showed a significant lack of emotion and awareness as to why he was excluded from his previous school. He had been referred to CAMHS and his parents were receiving privately commissioned support. A further CAMHS referral was made by Joanne Hodson in November 2019. It was also noted that AR’s anxiety had increased when reintegration into class began in December 2020.
- Under “other” it was noted that AR had used a school computer to look up American school shootings.

57. The measures to reduce AR’s risks were recorded on page 5 as follows:

- Close liaison with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) who were managing the risk and advising the school if there was any known risk of re-offending. When the Risk Assessment was last updated, AR was already closed to YOT and the risk of reoffending had been considered by them as being low.
- Specialist staff were deployed to work directly with AR.
- The anti-bullying policy was active to ensure AR felt safe in the setting and staff were to react promptly if AR said he was experiencing bullying, as this was a trigger for him. Staff would discuss with him to ensure he trusted the processes were fair so he allowed professionals to resolve the problem. Staff would monitor closely if he did not respond well to discussions.
- It was noted that all documentation regarding managing risk was strictly confidential and not to be discussed with AR. He preferred events were kept historical and he did not like people knowing. He found record keeping about his behaviour upsetting and intrusive and it was felt that he may return to being more secretive if he believed information was being

shared, or become confrontational with the person recording the risk, which would increase risk. No risks would be omitted or downplayed.

58. I have been preparing risk assessments for the whole of my working life for 30 years. I cannot recall any specific training about how to prepare one, but it came with professional experience and uptraining from colleagues. Risk assessments would always be cross-checked by a colleague.

59. Risk assessments are always based on facts and focus on the risks that a child poses to their peers or staff, or risks posed to them by virtue of their vulnerabilities. The document focuses on the risk within the setting you teach within, not risks in the community or at home.

60. It would not be practical to include every incident in a risk assessment, but key incidents should be flagged for awareness. For example, the fact that AR had previously researched school shootings was recorded but not every incident involving accessing inappropriate material was. This would be sufficient for a teacher to be aware of the type of risk that AR might look at pages which promote violence.

61. During the period I worked with AR there were no incidents of violence or reoffending, and I felt we were making progress around some of his views through our discussions. As such, I do think that the risk at that time was managed appropriately.

Referrals/Interactions with other agencies

62. I did not make any referrals to external bodies or agencies. This would fall within the remit of the DSL. As part of my role, I would log any concerns on CPOMs for the DSL to assess and action appropriately given their experience. I did have various interactions with the Youth Offending Team, CAMHs, Presfield, and Early Help and generally found the interactions and information sharing to be good.

Handover from the Range School and to Presfield High School

63. I did not have any involvement in AR's handover from the Range School. I did not begin teaching him until around a year later.

64. Similarly, I had limited involvement in AR's transfer to Presfield as it coincided with me leaving Acorns. As I have set out above, I did have one conversation with a woman in the SLT at Presfield.

Reflections and Improvements

65. I am not in a position to comment on any improvements at the Acorns school as I have not worked there since May 2022. In addition to the points I have raised elsewhere in this statement, I would like to offer the following reflections and recommendations:

66. AR's risk was very unique. He was the most complex child I have ever taught and pushed by professional skills to the limit. It was unusual for a child to be so academically able and articulate with such low social maturity and underdeveloped social skills. He could be highly manipulative which was relevant in determining how to teach him. It was important to be very calm and measured with him.

67. In my experience children with ASD and SEN needs can fall under the radar when they are academically able. In part this is because they are good at masking their social and emotional needs. These children often reach crisis point before something is done to address it. It is important to say that the link between social and emotional difficulties and antisocial behaviour is not a causal link. Many people have these same difficulties, and it does not mean they will be involved in criminal behaviour.

68. Acorns provided AR with a specialist educational provision, and I did feel that he was making progress. However, he continued to struggle with social connections and chose to be isolated. He did not have any friends. I recall that he told me that he used to play on his PlayStation with people online, but this was taken by the police when he was arrested. I thought that the transfer to Presfield would be positive as he would begin working within groups.

69. As AR had been involved with the police and had been referred to Prevent, I assumed he was being monitored in the background. As nothing was being raised with us that I knew of, I assumed his risk was not considered to be high.

70. I do not have a detailed knowledge of what AR's education was like after leaving Acorns, but in my experience, there are far too few SEN provisions for children over the age of 16 and the legal requirement to attend and engage with educational provision changes at 16. This makes preventative work due to non-attendance (which is required for under 16's) much harder to implement.

71. I am very aware that I was probably one of the last people to connect with AR and I think about this often. I did have concerns about AR, which are reflected in my CPOMs records, but I would never have envisioned him doing something as evil and premeditated as he did. At the time I really thought the risk was reducing, but without knowing the full picture. It now seems his self-radicalisation at home was increasing.

Disclosure

72. I confirm I am not in possession of any additional material relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

Concluding Remarks

73. I would like it to be known that I am very experienced working with violent and aggressive pupils and I did not approach working with AR in a way which is naive, underestimating the risk he posed or in any way condoning it. I hope that I achieved a healthy balance of challenging behaviour whilst developing trust and a good working relationship so he could learn better ways of interacting. I believe this work had a limited impact due to the overwhelming influence of what he was searching on the internet in his own time. I also believe preventative work such as Channel may have supported the whole family to regain trust and learn safer ways of being, but the family would have needed to consent to this.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed:

Signature

Dated: 18.8.25

Index to the Witness Statement of Margaret Allred

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference no.	Document Description
MA1	MERP000786	Police statement dated 25 November 2024
MA2	LCC001346	AR's CPOMs records
MA3	LCC001345	Chronology prepared by Joanne Hodson
MA4	LCC001580	Chronology prepared by Joanne Hodson
MA5	LCC000707	AR'S Risk Assessment Profile
MA6	LCC001526	Email chain dated 9 February 2021
MA7	LCC000455	Prevent Referral dated 1 February 2021
MA8	LCC001400	Prevent Referral dated 22 April 2021