

**OFFICIAL – Sensitive**  
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**MG11(W)**

**CPS Use Only**

<b>WITNESS STATEMENT</b>			
(Criminal Procedure Rules R16.2, Criminal Justice Act 1967 S9)			
		URN	
Statement of	<b>Joanne HODSON</b>		
Age if under 18	<b>Over 18</b> (if over 18 insert 'over 18')	Occupation	<b>Headteacher, Acorns School</b>
<p>This statement (consisting of 13 page(s)) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it, anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.</p>			
Signature	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p><b>Signature</b></p> <p><small>Joanne Hodson (Aug 19, 2024 10:48 GMT+1)</small></p> </div>	Date	<b>19/08/24</b>
Signature of parent / guardian / appropriate adult		Relationship of parent / guardian / appropriate adult	
<p>Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(supply witness details on MG11 Back)</i></p> <p>I am the above-named person and I reside at an address known to Merseyside Police. This statement is provided is my account of events leading up to the attendance of Police Officers visiting Acorn School and speaking with me regarding Axel RUDAKUBANA, who was a pupil at the school from 17th October 2019 to 1st April 2022.</p> <p>I am the Current Headteacher at Acorns secondary School having assumed this role on 15th July 2022. The Acorns School is a School that provides Special Educational Care and Needs. The school educates 65 pupils and has the ability to tailor education delivery to meet each child's needs.</p> <p>Prior to my role as Headteacher, I was the Acting Headteacher and SENCO lead from September 2020. I would describe my role as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) as quite an intense role. My core responsibilities are to ensure that Children who attend the school are able to receive the correct assessment of their needs. With this, I am to arrange a suitable educational Health Care Plan and to identify whether we are able to meet these needs as a school. In some cases, it may well be that the needs are so complex that the children may need to move on to</p>			

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another school, but this all forms as part of the measures we take as a school to ensure that the Children experience a suitable, fair learning environment.

The school itself subject to three terms in the year, running from September to July. The school day runs from 09:00 hours to 14:30 hours with thirty minutes for lunch.

Axel was enlisted on the enrolment 17th October 2019 following permanent exclusion from his previous school, Range High School in Formby. Axel's referral to this school was done through the Pupil Access Team at Lancashire County Council. This is a normal operating procedure for any pupil that had been permanently excluded from Schools within the Lancashire County Council area. We are the school that children attend following a permanent exclusion.

As part of the enrolment process, I was in receipt of a handover from the pupil access team. The handover detailed information surrounding the fact that Axel had been excluded permanently from Range High School due to the fact that he had brought a knife into school.

On 17th October 2019, I took part in an admissions meeting with Axel, where I asked him about the incident involving the knife. I want to highlight that this was commonplace for me to ask all pupils that are referred to our school about any incidents which are cause for concern as it is important for me to try and establish whether there will be any issues going forward. During the meeting with Axel, I asked him to tell me about why he took a knife into school. I was taken back and shocked by the fact that Axel replied "to use it". This comment was said in an emotionless way, making no eye contact. He did not think he had done anything wrong in his actions. I had a gut feeling that something was different about Axel. I think it is important to note that this feeling is based on years of experience in working with Children with additional needs. There was just something so cold about the way he described the incident. Due to this, I wanted to ensure that I investigated Axel's

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time at Range High School further and this led me to speak with David CREGEEN who was the Designated Safeguarding Lead at Range High School.

During a conversation with David, concerns were raised in that David explained a situation involving him bringing a knife into school. David explained that Axel had contacted Childline at home and informed them that he had ‘taken a knife into school on more than 10 occasions’.

Following this, Axel was asked whether this was true by staff at Range school, where he confirmed this to be true. Axel was then permanently excluded by the Headteacher after this incident. During the conversations with David, I learned that David shared my concerns around Axel and his level of accountability for his actions.

On Monday 28th October 2019, Axel began enrolment in school. I was hopeful that Axel would do well in the school but unfortunately from the first day, there were major concerns. It was evident from the beginning that Axel’s interactions with other kids and interactions with the staff were unusual. I would describe this behaviour as specifically targeting individuals, particularly certain members of staff. One example of this was on 15th November, a member of the IT staff was subject to aggressive abuse when asking Axel not to visit certain websites. Axel would persecute those that he felt challenged him and this was recorded within a working log that I created to record Axel’s behaviour and incidents that had occurred within the school. I have provided police with a copy of this document and will later exhibit it within this statement.

On 11th December 2019, the school was contacted by AVACAB, a taxi company that the school uses to collect children to bring them to school. The driver stated that he had arrived at Axel’s home address as per the usual arrangement where he witnessed Axel getting into another Taxi. The driver stated that he saw Axel leave in the taxi but was unsure where he was travelling to. Due

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to this information, the school then telephoned the company which was 'ALL WHITES' taxi firm, who explained that they could not provide any information. A member of staff from the school telephoned the Police, as I was worried that he may be attending Range High School. I knew that Axel had a fixation about the fact that he felt there was an injustice towards him. Axel had mentioned previously that he felt as though the only reason he was now at Acorn's School was because he was bullied in Range High School.

The police advised the school to contact Range High School in case Axel turned up there. A telephone call was made to the Range High School as advised who confirmed that Axel was present with Merseyside Police. I was later informed that Axel had been taken to St Anne Street Police Station where he was given various bail conditions, one of which was not to attend Acorns School.

I was later appraised by David CREGEEN as to what had happened at Range High School. What concerned me about this incident was that it had been planned for a few days before hand. Axel had ordered his own taxi, arranging for it to turn up at the same time as the school taxi. I felt as though this was a premeditated arrangement which was quite alarming to me.

Below I wish to evidence a timeline summary of the events that followed from there on after:

A Strategy meeting held 17th December 2019 which took place between the following agencies; Acorns School, Social Care, Sefton Camhs, Forensic Camhs, Prevent and Range High School.

I was present for the meeting where I expressed my concerns for Axel and how I was worried that he may do something similar in the Acorns School. My concerns led me to make the decision that I did not want Axel back in the School. I was met with some resistance by other agencies in this regard and there was pressure to bring Axel back to School, but I ensured that I expressed my

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concerns going forward and what risks I felt both the staff and pupils were facing having Axel back in the school.

It was agreed by the agencies, that referrals and assessments would be made by each agency and a further meeting would follow.

On 6th January 2020, A further meeting took place where it was determined that we would write to the family and make arrangements to send work home to Axel every Friday. In the meantime, Social Services were tasked with completing a risk assessment to see if it would be possible to have a tutor sent to Axel's home address.

A forensic Camhs meeting was held on 21st January 2020 and then a further Strategy meeting was held on 5th March.

I have provided a copy of the minutes of these meeting to Police which I will further exhibit within this document.

Work continued to be sent home for Axel to completed during the time he was not in school, this included the period of Lockdown due to Covid-19 which began in March 2020. Axel did not complete any of the work which was sent to him at home. We were advised by Axel's Father that Axel had the opinion of 'Home is for being at home, School work is to be done at School'.

In June 2020, we were advised as a school that we could re-open to provide education to vulnerable children. We made the decision as a school to offer a place to Axel on a two-to-one basis. We made this decision on the basis that we were now in receipt of the appropriate risk assessments which had been carried out by the Youth Offending Team which had been received in May.

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When the school's intention were communicated to Axel's father, he refuted the action taken by the School to have a two-to-one basis. Axel's Father provided the grounds that Axel would feel as though he was being monitored. I explained to Axel's Father that this was non-negotiable and he eventually accepted the reasoning behind this decision.

On 3rd July 2020 Axel began to attend School again, working on a two-to-one basis with staff members. It was evident that Axel was trying hard, and there was a visible positive change in his behaviour. Axel attended for a 1 hour period, and was working hard. He had good relationship with his teachers. This period of positivity continued right through to January 2021, where we started to see issues again from Axel. This was during a second period of Lockdown where school was ordered to be closed again.

On 20th January 2021, the school received a report from the Youth Offending Team highlighting that Axel had assaulted his father, Alphonse. We contacted Alphonse to see how he was doing and he denied the assault. We also spoke with Axel who stated that he had no concerns at home and did not make any disclosures during the conversation.

On 1st February 2021 we received a report from Range High School via David CREGEEN who stated that Axel had been contacting pupils from the school on Instagram and sending them images/videos of Colonel Gadaffi. As a result of this, the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Acorns, Jan Lewis made a Referral to Prevent. This was the Second referral which had been made to prevent, with the first being when Axel was researching School Shootings in Information Technology Class.

On 16th February 2021, Axel received a formal diagnosis for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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On around 24th February 2021, Axel began to refuse to carry out any work that was handed to him. It was believed that this was due to Axel being aware that there had been a prevent referral made about him. We contacted Alphonse, Axel's Father where we could hear Axel shouting in the background. It appeared to us, as a school, that Axel was having an influence on what responses his father was giving to us via telephone.

On 13th April 2021, Axel received a formal Education and Healthcare Plan (EHCP) which would remain in place until he turned 25 years of age.

On 22nd April, a third Prevent referral was put in by the school following an incident where Axel was researching the London Bridge Attack. Axel's father Alphonse was invited into the school for a meeting to discuss the incident and the referral. It was following the meeting that Axel returned to School advising that his father had disclosed to him that the prevent referral had been made. Axel explained to school that he had been shown a copy.

It was following this incident that there was a significant break down in communication with Alphonse and the relationship we had with him as a school. This was a significant turning point and we felt as though we had lost the support from Axel's parents.

We were contacted by Sam STEED who was a mental health professional working with the family at the time. Ms STEED advised that she was having difficulty working with Alphonse and had concerns about Axel not leaving the house.

During the months that followed, there were multiple reports from Sam STEED, which are listed within a document which I will later exhibit to accompany this statement.

In May 2021, Axel made a disclosure to one of the teachers he works with. Axel explained how he made a comment to dad about cooking as he did not normally cook. Dad has then said to Axel that

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is better than a children's home. Axel was angry and upset by this and has thrown juice over Dad.

Dad has then taken pictures and videos as a record for the police. Axel then states how Dad used to hit him, which was worse than throwing the juice. However, Axel thinks that Dad is now more scared of him. Axel is angry because Dad denied hitting him and as a result, Axel had hit dad on the top of his head. Dad has then told Axel that he is really violent and dangerous. Axel then has then told Dad that he will tell School what happened, and Dad has then said he will then delete photos and videos if Axel doesn't say anything to school' This account was read to Axel where he then confirmed to the teacher that it was accurate. Axel was then asked whether he feels safe at Home, to which he confirm that he did.

The school then contacted Dad to confirm this account, to which Dad denied it.

Sam STEED was also contacted who explained that she felt as though parents needed to do more work with Axel and that she would be in contact with them.

It was following this that Axel stopped coming to School. This was around the end of May 2021. We spoke to Axel's Mum, LEITITIA from this point on, where she would provide daily reasons for why Axel could not and did not want to attend School.

This continued from the period of May 2021 to November 2021, where Axel attended school intermittently through November and December 2021.

During this time the school receive two Operation Encompass referrals following disturbances at the address.

Axel attended school again intermittently in January 2022, where his behaviour was up and down, together with his attendance. We recorded each reason provided for Axel's none attendance as

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detailed by his parents. This attendance record has been handed to the police and will be later exhibited.

From 28th February 2022 Axel did not attend Acorns School again following him securing a place at Presfield's School. A formal handover was done with the school and we did not see Axel again following this date. Axel was taken off the School's roll on 1st April 2022.

On 17th March 2022 Axel was supposed to attend a taster day at the PRESFIELD High School on this date however I learned he did not attend. Axels dad Alphonse had called the Acorns school on this date to ask if Axel had turned up here. The school advised that Axel had not been seen at the school and he was advised to call the Police immediately on 999 to report him missing. On the 18th March 2022 the school received an Op ENCOMPASS referral stating that Axel had been reported as a missing person. The report made reference to Axel having been found on a bus where he had refused to pay for his bus fare. Axel had been in dispute with the driver and was therefore reported. The report states that the Police located Axel on the bus and realised he had been reported as a missing person. Axel had admitted to being in possession of a knife and had made comments that he had been planning on stabbing someone with a knife. He was going to use the knife to stab someone so that he could get in to trouble and subsequently get his 'TikTok' account to be closed down. The report also makes mention of Axel making comments that he had previously tried to make poison for this reason so that his TikTok account would be closed. The Acorns school forwarded this Encompass report including a full detailed CPOMS report to Presfield High School for their attention.

During the time in which Axel attended Acorn's School, I would describe my experience of Axel as challenging and concerning. There were times where Axel's behaviour was so unique that it

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required special measures to be put in place and I don't personally feel as though I was in receipt of full support from the family.

During the time that Axel was at School, we did not believe that he was subject to bullying by other pupils. There were occasions where Axel had been subject to comments from other pupils at the school which were fully investigated and reported to Dad. Members of staff within the school had heard comments thought to be directed towards Axel, however Axel was spoken to after these proposed comments and Axel did not appear to have heard them.

Axel did not have a friendship group, but he was taught on a two-to-one basis for most of his time here so it would have been difficult for him to socialise with other children. As far as I am aware, Axel did not have a friendship group outside of school either.

I have provided police with material which relates to Axel and his time at Acorns School. This material has been sent digitally in a folder containing subcategories which are summarised below. I produce the following Exhibits which accompany my statement. These exhibits are my exhibits and will be referred to as follows:

JH/01 – Referral to Acorns

JH/01A – Acers referral

JH/01B – CAHMS Letter

JH/01C – Permanent Exclusion letter

JH/01D – Letter to Parents

JH/02 - Assessment

JH/02A – Learning Diary 4.01.22 – 1.4.22

JH/02B – Acorns SEW Assessment Tool 2

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JH/02C – Acorns SEW Assessment Tool Comp

JH/02D – AR Admissions Diary Chronology

JH/02E – AR CATs Parents

JH/02F – AR Dyscal Parents

JH/02G – AR Dyscal Teachers

JH/02H – AR Pupil Assessment 7.2.22

JH/02I – My one page profile

JH/03 – Correspondence

JH/03A – Off Roll Review

JH/03B – Admissions Letter

JH/03C – AR 10.05.21

JH/03D – AR Letter re work from Home

JH/03E – Autumn Report 2021

JH/03F – Dear Mr R and Mrs

JH/04 – Timetables

JH/04A – AR Directions Form

JH/04B – AR Willow Timetable 4.11.19

JH/04C – AR Willow Timetable 11.11.19

JH/04D - AR Willow Timetable 18.11.19

JH/04E – Master Willow Timetable 2019 – 2020

JH/05 – Welfare

JH/05A – 02.02.22 Meeting Outcomes

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JH/05B – Early Help Plan 11 Jan 2022

JH/05C – Meeting Outcomes 12 Jan 2022

JH/06 – EHCP

JH/06A – Record of Strategy Discussion 03.03.2020

JH/06B – Amended Draft EHC Plan

JH/06C – AR C&F Assessment

JH/06D – AR Cats Teachers

JH/06E -AR Child or young person advise towards review

JH/06F – AR Email

JH/06G – AR Parental review advice

JH/06H – AR ASD Assessment Report

JH/06I – Chronology of AR

JH/06J – CPOMS

JH/06K – Final EHC Plan

JH/06L – Funding Form

JH/06M – Lancashire Concern form

JH/06N – Letter 1 AR

JH/06O – My One page profile

JH/06P – NOPTC Letter

JH/06Q – Notes from Meeting with Forensic CAHMS 21

JH/06R – Primary and Secondary EHC Assessment Advice

JH/06S – SEW Assessment Completed 26.11.19

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Statement of	<b>Joanne HODSON</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">JH/06T – Welfare Call Log Covid 19</p> <p>JH/07 – AR EHCP Review</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07A – AR 10.05.21</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07B – AR PLP Sep 20</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07C – Learner Passport 14.4.21</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07D – Education Advice towards annual review</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07E – Professional Advice towards annual review</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07F – Final EHC Plan</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07G – Funding Form AR</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07H – Axels ASD Assessment Report</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07I – EHC Annual Review</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">JH/07J – Learner Passport 12.05.21</p> <p>JH/08 – Education and Health Care Plan 12.05.2021</p>	
Statement taken by (print name)	Constable 1133 FRY
Station	North West Regional Organised Crime Unit
Date, time statement taken	15/08/2024 10:30 hours







# Witness Statement, Mrs J HODSON

Final Audit Report

2024-08-19

Created:	2024-08-16 (British Summer Time)
By:	Charlotte Fry (Charlotte.Fry@nwrocu.police.uk)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAALkt3utSDB7KRny3Qb-r8sA1Zbk9tSRVV

## "Witness Statement, Mrs J HODSON" History

-  Document created by Charlotte Fry (Charlotte.Fry@nwrocu.police.uk)  
2024-08-16 - 14:00:45 GMT+1
-  Document emailed to j.hodson@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk for signature  
2024-08-16 - 14:23:02 GMT+1
-  Email viewed by j.hodson@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk  
2024-08-19 - 10:22:07 GMT+1
-  Signer j.hodson@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk entered name at signing as Joanne Hodson  
2024-08-19 - 10:48:52 GMT+1
-  Document e-signed by Joanne Hodson (j.hodson@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk)  
Signature Date: 2024-08-19 - 10:48:54 GMT+1 - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.  
2024-08-19 - 10:48:54 GMT+1