

Loretto School abuse survivor settles landmark legal case

A former boarding school pupil has secured a landmark legal victory after suing Loretto School for historic abuse.

Angus Bell, 44, launched a legal action over claims he was repeatedly attacked at the plush secondary school in Musselburgh, East Lothian.

The Scot, who now lives in Canada, alleged to being repeatedly assaulted for eight years and teachers knew about it and either failed to intervene or took steps to cover it up.

A civil trial – believed to be the first involving pupil-on-pupil abuse – was set for early June with 12 former pupils and four former teachers lined up to provide damning testimonies.

But last week Loretto School bosses agreed to end the action via an out of court settlement for a six-figure sum.

A vindicated Angus said: “The school knew abuse was happening and all too often chose to look the other way and at no point has Loretto contacted me to apologise – not even after I gave evidence at the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.

“But finally outsiders know what happened within those walls. Finally the school has been held to account.

“The daily abuse I suffered at Loretto, from eight years of unchecked, harrowing peer-on-peer assaults, has been life changing.

“I want to give special thanks to those who had the courage to support me.

Particular praise must go to English teacher David Stock, whose career was terminated for confronting the Loretto authorities about the widespread culture of physical, sexual and psychological abuse in 1991.

“There is still much work to be done and I will continue to support fellow survivors as it is vital the truth continues to be heard so current and future generations of children are protected.”

The legal challenge against Loretto first came to light in November 2023.

At the time Angus revealed he had been sexually and emotionally abused by older pupils during the 1990s.

He also gave accounts of extreme violence including kids set on fire, pupils beaten with hockey sticks and cricket bats daily, others whipped with belts, waterboarding in toilets and being thrown down stairs.

At the time Angus likened every day to being “a cross between The Purge and The Running Man – it was eight years in Hell.”

Richard Pitts, Partner at Digby Brown, led the legal action against Loretto School.

He said: “The treatment depicted at Loretto was horrific – in my years as an abuse solicitor it’s among some of the worst accounts of violence and depravity I’ve ever heard of.

“Angus has been strong, calm and resilient throughout his entire journey and I commend him for what he has been able to do because he has not just secured justice for himself – in all likelihood he has opened the doors to help others get the outcome they deserve too.”

Pete Richardson, Head of Loretto School said: "We can confirm that the matter has been resolved in terms agreed with Mr Bell.

"Whilst we do not intend to comment on the detail of matters raised by Mr Bell, what has been averred in the Court action is not congruent with our understanding of the experience of others at Loretto at that time.

"The whole question of behaviours in Loretto over the years has been considered in detail by SCAI.

"We continue to support the work of SCAI and, where wrongdoing has been recognised in the past, we have made an unreserved apology – we would encourage anyone with an interest in this matter to look at the excellent work done by SCAI.

"In the Loretto of today, child protection, wellbeing and the happiness of all pupils is our top priority."