



## IICSA Interim Report

Statement on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2018

### Downside Abbey & School (“Downside”)

On 9 August 2018, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) published its Report in respect of the case study examining Ampleforth and Downside Abbeys and their respective schools. Further information about IICSA and this case study is available on our website [here](#).

We would like to reiterate our sincere and unreserved apology to all victims and survivors of sexual abuse suffered as a result of the actions of some within the Downside community. The Abbey and School fully acknowledges the serious failings and mistakes made in both protecting those within our care and responding to safeguarding concerns. We have reflected deeply and will continue to listen with the ear of the heart going forward to ensure that the mistakes of the past are never repeated. It is helpful that IICSA’s report recognises some of the significant steps we have and are continuing to take in order to address safeguarding challenges at Downside.

Downside recognises and appreciates the enormous task undertaken by the Inquiry and the efforts of those involved. The Abbey and School are very grateful to all those involved in the Inquiry and in particular the victims and survivors who demonstrated such bravery in coming forward and providing their evidence. The Inquiry process has provided an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past and to look forward with safeguarding as the foundation of everything we do. Since Downside representatives gave evidence to the Inquiry in November 2017, there have been a number of developments in relation to safeguarding at Downside. Significant changes have been implemented to date, such as monks no longer holding key positions in the School, and work continues to ensure we attain the highest standards in safeguarding.

- The Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) have conducted a thorough safeguarding audit of the School and Abbey. The report is available on our website: [here](#). The audit found that within the School, a safe culture is very well-embedded, and an awareness of safeguarding is wide and deep. It also recognised that safeguarding awareness in the Abbey is developing and noted that monastic leaders are actively engaged in this effort.
- A new lay Headmaster, Andrew Hobbs, has been appointed for Downside School. We are delighted that Andrew will be taking on this new position. Andrew has taken a leading role in safeguarding at Downside and the SCIE audit recognised him as central

to the improvements at the School. Andrew will take on the role of Headmaster from September 2018.

- A new lay Chair of Governors, Adrian Aylward, was appointed in January 2018.
- Plans for a new independent school trust are underway which retain the Benedictine ethos of the School.
- The Monastery has provided the required permission for a new independent school trust to be established.
- A new team of advisors were appointed to manage the separation of the School and Monastery and the creation of a new independent Trust for the School and a Project Manager was appointed in April 2018 to manage the process.
- Plans for the recruitment of new School Trustees are underway.
- A new Prior Administrator for Downside Abbey, Dom Nicholas Wetz from Belmont Abbey, has been appointed from September 2018.

We welcome this opportunity to develop and maintain the highest standards in safeguarding and work with other safeguarding partners. We at Downside know that this is just the beginning and we have embraced a forward-thinking approach to safeguarding which ensures that all those within our care are protected and listened to going forward.

We are fully committed to helping victims and survivors access the support most appropriate to their needs, through our links with the Clifton Diocese Safeguarding Team. The Contact number for the Clifton Diocese Safeguarding Team is: 0117 954 0993.

For further information please contact Jane Vines, Director of External Communications at Downside, on 01761 235158 or by email [jvines@downside.co.uk](mailto:jvines@downside.co.uk)