

Schools urged to employ more gay teachers

Activist says LGBT pupils need role models to prevent bullying he endured at Fettes College

Shân Ross

A FORMER pupil of one of Scotland's most prestigious schools is calling for openly gay teachers to be appointed as role models for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) pupils.

Philip Christopher Baldwin, 30, a gay rights activist and a major donor and ambassador for various charities including the Terrance Higgins Trust, Albert Kennedy Trust and Positively UK, said he was targeted for being gay while at Fettes College in Edinburgh.

The school, which charges about £30,000 a year for senior boarders, counts former prime minister Tony Blair and James Bond author Ian Fleming among its past pupils.

Baldwin, a boarder from 1996 to 2003, said the experi-

ence had been damaging psychologically and part of his campaigning was to ensure no other LGBT pupil, at any type of school, suffers as he did.

He said teachers did not make homophobic remarks but failed to challenge offensive comments made within earshot, sometimes directed at him. "With no parents around, teachers at a boarding school take on an even more important role," said Baldwin, who later trained as a lawyer.

"I started to realise I was gay around the age of 12. But homophobic language was widespread amongst pupils and created the foundation for homophobia targeted against

'Teachers at a boarding school take on an even more important role'



» Philip Christopher Baldwin said his experience while boarding at Fettes College had been damaging psychologically

specific individuals. I couldn't talk to anyone about it and pretended to fancy girls but each year things escalated.

"This wasn't really that long ago. We had a Labour government in 1997 and it was a time of great social change, the age of consent was being lowered and Section 28 was repealed, [the clause banned local authorities from promoting homosexuality] yet being at Fettes was like living in the 1970s," said Baldwin, who

found out he was HIV positive when he was 24.

A Fettes College spokeswoman said: "Fettes College is saddened and disappointed to learn that one of our former pupils felt isolated and encountered homophobic attitudes while attending Fettes College 15 years ago. However, it is difficult to comment on historic circumstances, especially when allegations of bullying were not received at the time, other than to express profound regret that any member of our community should have had this experience.

"We would however wish to emphasise the open, tolerant

and broad-minded nature of the attitudes that are prevalent at Fettes College today and we would be delighted to invite Mr Baldwin to come and visit the college to experience this for himself and indeed to speak to the pupils about his work as a gay rights activist."

Larry Flanagan, general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland, said: "There are openly gay teachers working in schools. But deciding to be openly gay is a choice for each individual teacher. Young people should be able to attend school and work hard without fear their sexuality is going to create problems for them."

Mystery of corpse found on shoreline

Nicholas Christian

DETECTIVES are trying to identify the body of a man found on the shoreline at South Queensferry.

Police and Coastguard were called after a report of a body in the water at Hawes Pier at about 10.20pm on Thursday.

The man was pronounced dead at the scene. His death is not being treated as suspicious.

Officers said he was not carrying any identification and inquiries were under way to find out his name.

The man was white, about 5ft 10ins tall with blackish-grey receding hair, in his late 40s and with a medium build. He wore a black button-front jacket, blue hooded top with full zip and white toggles, blue denim Levi jeans, black hat, black scarf and navy gloves.

Det Sgt Kevin Tait, of Corstorphine Police Station in Edinburgh, said: "Our investigation is continuing to establish this man's identity and we would ask anyone who can assist with our ongoing inquiries to contact police on 101."

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