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Bishop called to mediate dispute between Eton head and teachers

By Robert Mendick and Camilla Turner

A DISPUTE between Eton's headmaster and the "beaks" led to one of the country's most senior bishops intervening under a 600-year-old rule, *The Daily Telegraph* has learnt.

A housemaster at the famous school wrote to the Bishop of Lincoln, Eton's "Visitor" under rules dating back to its foundation in 1440, in a plea for help.

Bishop Christopher Lowson travelled to the school in 2018 to act as a mediator over teachers' concerns over Simon Henderson, the youngest headmaster in Eton's history.

The disclosure that the bishop was

called upon suggests that relations between Mr Henderson and at least some of his staff were already in difficulty, long before the latest dispute over the sacking of teacher Will Knowland in a row over free speech.

It is thought to be the first time a teacher has "instigated" a visit from the bishop to settle a dispute at Eton in 200 years.

In a bizarre twist, Bishop Lowson was suspended from his post a year after he travelled to Eton from his diocese to meet with the teachers and headmaster.

His suspension was ordered by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, himself an Old Etonian. Well-placed sources said the problems at

Eton and Bishop Lowson's suspension, which remains in place, are not connected.

The visit by the bishop followed a request for help from Ralph Oliphant-Callum, who was then a housemaster and still teaches at the school.

The role of Visitor at Eton was established by Henry VI, when he founded the school in 1440, as an independent mediator in disputes. The role was given to the Bishop of Lincoln and remains part of the remit.

According to sources, at the time of the Visitor's intervention, teachers – known as "beaks" – had been alarmed by Mr Henderson's "concerted effort" to "shift the culture" of the school amid



Bishop of Lincoln, Christopher Lowson, was asked to mediate under rules dating back to Eton's foundation in 1440

claims he was eroding the traditional power base of housemasters in favour of a centralised senior leadership team, based in the so-called "bunker".

Mr Henderson had eschewed the traditional headmaster's office for what staff nicknamed the "bunker" in a modern office building in the school's extensive grounds.

Mr Oliphant-Callum has confirmed he called in the bishop over "various concerns" but said the issues were resolved and that Mr Henderson had his full support.

He said the bishop's visit triggered an "internal procedure" and that Bishop Lowson worked with Eton's Provost Lord Waldegrave and its Fellows – the school's governors and chairman – who "took various actions" that "reached a conclusion" several months later in 2019.

Mr Oliphant-Callum added: "All involved were remarkably open and magnanimous throughout. The headmaster was particularly impressive in his generous and honest response and

in his desire to engage and learn from the various discussions."

A number of sources have complained about the headteacher's leadership after arriving at the school in 2015.

One former teacher said: "Very soon after Simon Henderson arrived he became very unpopular for a variety of reasons. He was involved in demoting some very well established and well regarded senior staff."

The former teacher said some staff believed that Mr Henderson had "elevated gender sensitivity training to the top of the agenda". The source alleged that "there was a widespread sense of low morale".

Eton College declined to comment.

GP suspended for '99pc of complaints by women' claim

By Tammy Hughes

A GP with more than 30 years' experience has been suspended for a year after claiming "99 per cent" of complaints about the NHS are lodged by women.

Robert Keane made the remark after he dismissed concerns about him from a doctor who had worked for just one day as a locum at Lakenheath Surgery, in West Suffolk, in 2018.

He dismissed her grievance as a "vindictive pile of female c---" before failing to engage in a subsequent investigation into his behaviour.

Dr Keane later stood by the remarks, a disciplinary hearing was told.

The Medical Practitioners Tribunal in Manchester heard Dr Keane received a complaint from another doctor identified only as Doctor A.

He subsequently failed to co-operate for seven months by not returning documents, not meeting medical advisers, being disrespectful in correspondence and failing to undergo an assessment of behavioural concerns.

In November 2018, he sent an email describing Dr A's complaint about him – the nature of which was not disclosed –

as "just a vindictive pile of female c---". After he was asked to explain, he said: "Well, you know, 99 per cent of the complaints in the NHS come from females and I've been doing my job for 33 years and yes, I mean, it's not my finest hour but that's my explanation."

Ian Comfort, the tribunal chairman, said: "It indicated a lack of respect to a colleague, it indicated scant regard for the integrity of the complaints process

'It indicated a lack of respect to a colleague, [and] scant regard for the integrity of the complaints process'

and it indicated a dismissive approach to his professional obligations."

Georgina Goring, on behalf of the General Medical Council, criticised Dr Keane for making "reference to a colleague's gender".

Ms Goring also said Dr Keane showed a "lack of respect" to colleagues and was "dismissive" of the complaint process. Dr Keane said he was "very sorry about the emails and if they upset anyone".



Supersize Yorkshire Sculpture Park unveils new work this winter, such as 'Bag of Aspirations', by Kalliopi Lemos, a large work modelled on the Hermès Birkin handbag.

Smugglers charge migrants £300 for Channel crossing

By Charles Hymas
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

CHANNEL migrants are being offered special Christmas cut-price crossings by people smugglers for as little as £300 per person, say intelligence sources.

The cost is averaging between £500 and £1,000 with the lowest at £300, as traffickers slash prices to attract migrants fearful of winter seas and because of an increased police presence on French beaches, according to Border Force and police intelligence.

Border Force and the National Crime Agency are braced for a surge on Christmas and Boxing Day – as happened last year – as the traffickers exploit the calmer seas expected over Christmas when fewer border officers are on duty.

The average prices are less than a third of the 3,000 euros (£2,700) that traffickers were charging in September, one of the peak months for crossings.

Home Office sources believe the prices have been depressed by competition between the trafficking gangs for fewer migrants as new measures to combat the crossings begin to bite.

Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, agreed to pay France £28 million to double the number of officers patrolling beaches and increase surveillance with drones and CCTV to stop migrants crossing the Channel.

Border Force and police are stepping up their operations over the two-week festive period in anticipation of a surge, emulating last year when Christmas and Boxing Days saw some of the largest numbers of arrivals to the UK on a single day.

Traffickers are also said to be using Brexit as an incentive by warning migrants that it will be harder to secure asylum in the UK after the transition period ends on Dec 31.

A Home Office source said: "These vile criminals will stop at nothing to illegally smuggle people into the UK."

"The latest wheeze is cut-throat prices to exploit vulnerable women and children, enticing them to put lives on the line in a deadly crossing to the UK."

"Our security services are doing everything they can to go after the criminals behind this human trade."

More than 8,500 migrants have reached the UK via small boats this year, seven times the number in 2019.