

Witness Name:

Statement No: WITN0476001

Dated: 21st July 2026

THE NOTTINGHAM INQUIRY

Final WITNESS STATEMENT OF NIGEL EDWARD ROY THOMAS,

21st July 2026

I, Nigel Edward Roy Thomas, will say as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Nigel Edward Roy Thomas and I am currently employed as a Teaching Assistant at Haverfordwest High VC School. This statement is in response to a request for a statement to the Nottingham Inquiry regarding Valdo Calocane's time at Sir Thomas Picton School, Haverfordwest.

2. I hold a BA (Hons) degree in Portuguese and Spanish Languages and Literatures (University of Leeds, 1983) and an MA in Popular Culture from the Open University. From 1983 to 2005, I lived in Portugal where I was employed as an English language teacher at a private language school (1983-1985), an English language instructor at the University of Lisbon (1985-92), a translator and Education Officer at the British Council, Lisbon, and as a freelance translator. I returned to the United Kingdom in 2005, and was employed as a Learning Support Assistant at Sir Thomas Picton Secondary School from September 2006 and, after the merger of the two **GRO-B** secondary schools, at Haverfordwest High VC School.

BACKGROUND

3. When Valdo Calocane and his younger brother Elias came to **GRO-B** and were enrolled at Sir Thomas Picton Secondary School, I was assigned to work with them due to my fluency in Portuguese. The school was not aware when they first came of the level of their proficiency in English, so my job was to support them in mainstream classes, to offer them one-to-one tuition to bring their English language skills up to the required standard and also to serve as someone to whom they could speak in their own language if any problems arose. Elias went straight into Year 7 (with his age-group) but it was decided that Valdo should be placed in Year 10 in order to give him the opportunity to obtain a sufficient number of passes at GCSE to give him as wide a range of post-16 options as possible. He was enrolled in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics as his compulsory subjects, and he chose Music, PE and Resistant Materials as his options. Because he was not required to register for Science or Welsh, he had a number of free hours, some of which were used for extra English work or, as he moved into Year 11, to complete coursework assignments. I attended English and Music lessons with him (but worked with other pupils in those classes when Valdo did not require my support) and I worked one-to-one with him for some of his free hours. I liaised with his teachers in those subjects where I was unable to attend classes with him due to other timetable commitments, to ensure that he was making progress and fulfilling the requirements to enable him to gain a full raft of qualifications. Valdo had never studied Music formally, so it appeared to be the subject in which he required more support, at least at the beginning of the course. It was decided that I would also support him in his English lessons, as much to train him in exam technique as to improve his writing

skills. In all, I probably attended Valdo's classes an average of 5 or 6 hours per week and I worked one-to-one with him around 7 or 8 hours per week.

4. As a Learning Support Assistant, I was not required to keep records or retain examples of work from the pupils with whom I was working. The success or otherwise of my work was gauged by my pupils' performance in mainstream classes. As such, I was not required to keep mark books or samples of work and I have retained no paper or electronic copies of information from that time.

5. At the time, the ethnic make-up of the school was, rather like Pembrokeshire itself, overwhelmingly white. To the best of my recollection, we had a number of Chinese-origin pupils, some of South-East Asian origin and a few black or mixed race pupils. Valdo and Elias were the first Afro-Portuguese pupils at Sir Thomas Picton School.

6. Valdo was, in many ways, a model student. He was extremely focused on succeeding and attaining high levels of achievement in all his subjects. Although he was initially placed in a low-ability set for English, he made rapid progress and was moved into a higher ability group. He was particularly interested in doing well at Music and learned to read notation, time signatures, treble and bass clefs within a matter of weeks. In his one-to-one sessions with me, we would study and discuss newspaper articles or, as his GCSE course-work deadlines approached, what he needed to do to meet the requirements. Although he initially found writing in English quite laborious, he made rapid progress and revealed himself to be a responsive reader and a skilled and sensitive writer.

7. He was always unfailingly polite and, to the best of my knowledge and recollection, was never sanctioned for poor behaviour. I never heard of him being either the perpetrator or victim of bullying behaviour. Had it happened, it is likely that

I would have been informed. To a large extent, he kept himself to himself, and concentrated on his academic work. Valdo was reserved and, particularly in Years 10 and 11, did not take an active part in the social life of his tutor group. However, I do not remember him being anxious about speaking to adults he did not know - at the beginning of his time at Sir Thomas Picton, he was hesitant in his use of spoken English, but this developed over time. By the end of Year 11, Valdo had achieved the grades necessary to be admitted to the school Sixth Form.

8. Because the entry requirements for the 6th form are quite stringent, it was not normal practice to offer additional support to pupils. Consequently, my contact with Valdo was drastically reduced: the odd chat if we crossed paths in the corridor. I would occasionally speak to his 6th form teachers, and he appeared to have made a good start to 6th form study. However, a few months into his first year in the 6th form, the Head Teacher called me to a meeting with Valdo, who had expressed a wish to give up his studies. The Head Teacher asked Valdo to take some time before he made his final decision and, in the interim, she asked me to meet with him once a week, just to check that he was still on track and keeping up with his work. Valdo showed no reluctance to do this. He expressed an interest in going on to study Cinema and Film History, which led me to believe that he intended to complete his A-levels. As far as I could ascertain, he was doing well in his English Literature course, but in later conversations with his Music teacher, I was informed that things were not going well. Valdo had begun piano lessons, and as one of his performance pieces, had chosen something that was far beyond his ability.

9. I was later called to another meeting with the Head Teacher, Mrs Joan Bessant, and Valdo's parents, where I learned that he had left the family home and was living in a bedsit in **GRO-B**. I am assuming that Valdo was still on roll as

a 6th form student but, to the best of my recollection, he was no longer attending classes. I do not know whether the meeting was called by the Head Teacher or at the request of Valdo's parents. They were clearly relieved to have someone at the meeting to whom they could speak in their own language and, in many ways, it served to allow them to express their concern at his decisions but also to thank the Head Teacher and the school for the care shown to Valdo. At this point, it was clear that he was no longer interested in pursuing A-level studies. I was not informed as to the reasons for his leaving home or abandoning his studies. His mother also informed me that he was no longer attending church with the family. I found out later from a fellow Learning Support Assistant that Valdo had taken on a cleaning job at the local FE college and that he had begun to study A-level Maths there.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO-B

Dated: 21st July 2026