Q) When and why was this investigation and report commissioned and by whom?

In September of 2019, a former Grace Church School student reported that he had been sexually abused in the 1990’s by then Church Choirmaster Bruce McInnes. Within weeks, the School and Grace Church jointly commissioned Cozen O’Connor, a Philadelphia-based law firm, to conduct an independent investigation. The School and Church felt a strong obligation to understand and share the facts surrounding the abuse, to hold themselves accountable for any failures to protect the children entrusted into their care, and to support the healing of this and any other survivors while ensuring the safety of current and future students.

Q) How extensive was the investigation?

The Cozen investigators interviewed 59 witnesses, including current and former employees and officials of the School and Church, former choir members, and parents of former choir members. In addition, Cozen O’Connor reviewed hundreds of contemporaneous documents.

Q) What were the key issues identified in the report?

The Investigative Report describes ways in which the School and Church failed in their most sacred responsibility: to keep children safe. These included faulty decisions around the hiring and supervision of McInnes, inadequate responses to warning signs, failures to fully investigate and promptly terminate McInnes when presented with evidence of his misconduct, and failures to communicate with parents. The specifics are detailed in the full Investigative Report and summarized in the Executive Summary.

Q) How many students were harmed by McInnes? Are there any other cases?

Five former students filed civil complaints, which were all referenced in the Cozen report. The investigators interviewed two additional former students who experienced abuse. Witnesses in the 90’s saw an incident involving a student whom they could not identify, and there may have been more. In addition to those eight known to have been abused by McInnes, four former students from the 50’s, 60’s and 80’s reported physical or sexual abuse by individuals other than McInnes, and those reports are being investigated. There are no complaints against any current or recent School or Church employees.

Q) What is the status of the five lawsuits?

Through a process of structured mediation entered into voluntarily by all parties, settlements were reached in all of the lawsuits.

Q) Has the School apologized to the survivors of McInnes’s abuse?

The Board of the School has apologized, publicly and privately, to the survivors. The School has expressed its profound sorrow for harm done to the survivors and their families. George Davison, who was Head of School during much of McInnes’s tenure, has consistently expressed his deep regret that children were harmed while he was Head and his readiness to support the healing process in any way he can—in the months ahead and following his retirement on June 30, 2022.
Q) Beyond the settlements, what else is the School doing to support survivors and any other in the future?

The Board has authorized funding to support the establishment of a therapy fund about which they will be sharing additional information soon.

Q) What has the School learned from the investigation and the Cozen Report?

Nothing is more important than a school’s obligation to protect the well-being of children, and the Cozen Report reveals a sobering portrait of two communities plagued by distractions, flawed decision-making, and repeated failures of leadership and communication. The School acknowledges that its failures resulted in great harm to the survivors, heartbreak for their families, and distress for the community at large.

Q) What have you done to make sure nothing like this ever happens again?

Many policies and procedures have changed since the 1990’s, and additional changes were made after an internal review of child protection measures in 2019. Last year, the School and Church jointly engaged professionals with expertise in church safety, school safety, parenting, physical plant security and survivor experience to serve as an External Review Committee. This Committee conducted a thorough examination of the policies, culture, physical plant, and systems of accountability at the School and Church and issued a report with recommendations. You can view their report here.

The Board feels a tremendous sense of urgency to expeditiously, thoroughly, and efficiently evaluate and act upon the recommendations of the External Review Committee and the findings from the Cozen Investigative Report. Making our community safer for those in our care is the best way to honor the survivors whose courage in coming forward prompted the investigation.

Q) What new policies and procedures were enacted after the 2019 review?

Following the 2019 review:

- We codified guidelines for faculty and staff around professional relationships with students supported by in-person training facilitated by T&M Protection.
- We required all faculty and staff to participate in training led by Prepare, Inc aimed at recognizing and interrupting boundary violations.
- We updated protocols for providing professional references.
- We offered parent programming aimed at helping families promote personal safety for their children.
- We created Student Support Guides; adults identified to students in the high school with training in mental health to whom students would feel comfortable making a report.

We’ve also worked to change the culture in two ways: first, with a proactive approach to prevention, and second, expanding specific responsibility to more adults while emphasizing child safety as everyone’s duty.

Q) What were the findings of the External Review Committee?

The External Review Committee assessed current policies and procedures against a best-practices report issued in 2018 by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS), entitled “Prevention and Response – Recommendations
for Independent School Leaders from the Independent School Task Force on Educator Sexual Misconduct.”

While the Committee found that the School and Church have already adopted many measures set forth in that report, they suggested clarifying and tightening prevention and response processes, including delineation of responsibility, reporting, screening, training, tracking and decision-making. All of these suggestions are being implemented or considered.

The External Review Committee’s report is available here.

A document, Promoting Student Safety and Wellbeing at Grace, has been posted for the community about these measures. It will be updated as further changes are put in place.

**Q) What is the School doing to ensure that the Church and the School policies are aligned and adequately protect the safety of Grace students, especially those in the Choir?**

The Cozen investigation found that inadequate coordination and communication between the School and Church during the period in question contributed to gaps in child protection measures. Many steps have been taken in recent years to strengthen the working relationship between the two institutions, and we have initiated more.

As the External Review Committee noted in its report, the School and Church share common spaces for their programs, which makes it essential to coordinate and align child protection policies. The Joint Committee, a standing group of senior leaders of both institutions, has committed to doing an annual review of each institutions’ child protection measures and an audit of shared spaces.

**Q) Do you think more students/alums will come forward?**

We asked the investigators to be as comprehensive as possible in their efforts to locate and contact all members of the Boys’ and Girls’ Choir during McInnes’s tenure and all individuals who might have information to share.

In all of our previous communications, we’ve encouraged community members to contact Cozen O’Connor if they have information about possible sexual abuse involving Grace students and employees of the School or Church from any era. We ask that they contact Leslie Gomez at Cozen O’Connor (215-665-5546), Robbie Pennoyer at 212-475-5610, ext. 8104, or local law enforcement or child protective services.

We will support any student, former student or faculty or staff member who has been harmed by anyone in our community, and we applaud those who have come forward for their courage.

**Q) How much did this investigation cost the school?**

We’re not disclosing any of the financial details regarding the investigation or settlements. We do want to assure the community that these costs will have no effect on tuition, programing or the quality of education at our school.

**Q) Will the Church Choir continue to be one of the activities available to students at Grace Church School?**
Yes. Grace Church School opened in 1894 as New York City’s first choir boarding school, and the Grace Church Choir has been an important and integral part of the educational program for many of our students since then.

**Q) If I have comments, concerns or questions about the investigation process, the report, or the findings, whom should I contact?**

We welcome any feedback or questions. We’ve created a designated email address feedback@gc-school.org through which you can be connected with a member of the Board or senior leadership from the School.