



CAMPBELL  
COLLEGE

ESTD 1894

# CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

Revised: June 2017  
Next Revision: June 2019

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to make it clear how people can raise legitimate concerns or register complaints with the school. In general, anonymous complaints will be disregarded unless substantiated by another known party. It is at the discretion of the Headmaster in consultation with the Board of Governors to decide whether the gravity of any anonymous complaints warrants further investigation.

**The College recognises the difference between a concern and a complaint and it is the College's belief that concerns should be raised through timely positive dialogue and that most issues can, and should, be dealt with quickly and informally, thus reducing the need for formal intervention. A good relationship between parents and the College is vital.**

**When it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this complaints procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure such as Positive Behaviour, Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs, Anti-Bullying, E-Safety, Boarding or Suspensions and Expulsions.**

## 2. AIMS

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolves as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to all those concerned and it helps promote staffs', parents' and student's confidence in the College's ability to safeguard and promote welfare. The College will try to resolve the concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing systems and procedures in the light of circumstances. We encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

**CONCERN** : is a query or anxiety or dissatisfaction with an aspect of the College processes and procedures which is raised or otherwise brought to the attention of the College and which is resolved informally.

**COMPLAINT** : is a concern that cannot be resolved informally but has been made formally in writing and considered under the formal procedure as described in this policy.

#### **4. APPOINTMENTS AT THE COLLEGE**

Due to the busy nature of school life and the demands of a teaching timetable it will normally be necessary to make an appointment to see a particular member of staff at the College face-to-face (this is done by calling the main switchboard). Staff will try and get back to you when possible, but please be mindful that a member of staff have a teaching commitment and other duties to attend to.

Parents cannot expect to be seen immediately by arriving at the school unannounced. In the interests of safeguarding, visitors to the school must either report to Front of House, or be met directly by a member of staff.

**Under no circumstances may a visitor to the College independently enter the buildings to find a member of staff as this may constitute a safeguarding issue.**

#### **5. GENERAL POINTS**

##### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Names of those involved in raising a concern or making a complaint cannot be kept confidential; however, knowledge of the complaint will be limited to those who need to know. Concerns or complaints which could involve the safety of an individual, or where a child protection issue is raised, cannot be kept confidential as it may need to be referred to a senior member of staff, or to an outside agency.

**It would not be usual practice to discuss disciplinary actions the College has taken involving other pupils.**

##### **CONDUCT DURING MEETINGS OR CONVERSATIONS**

- All persons involved in a meeting (whether in person or over the telephone) are expected act in a professional and courteous manner. This includes comments committed to print.
- Informal meetings can only be held with parents and guardians; having an external person present may make the meeting formal, and the school may request that the meeting progresses under these terms. The complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted by the Headmaster/Head of Junior School / Board that this will assist in an investigation and resolution of the complaint.
- Legal representation is not allowed at any stage during meetings, formal or informal.
- Derogatory comments about another individual whether that be a member of staff, another pupil or another parent are not acceptable. All individuals must be referred to in a respectful manner.
- For all parties involved in any form of conversation or meeting, defamatory or aggressive conversations are not acceptable and the conversation will be postponed to a later date when the conversation can continue in a professional manner. Insulting, aggressive or threatening conversations or any involving inappropriate language will be terminated.
- When a professional meeting or conversation cannot be continued, the original decision by the College will stand.

##### **CONDUCT ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

We are delighted to have the support of our students, parents and our staff on social media and recognise the importance of this medium as a way of connecting our Campbell Community. However, social media is not the appropriate forum to voice specific concerns or complaints. We would rather deal with issues in the manner outlined in this policy to ensure they are dealt with effectively, professionally and in a respectful manner to all parties involved. This applies to public or private social media platforms.

Hence, any concerns and complaints regarding the College should be raised in accordance with our policy: directly to the College and by the person raising the concern and **not** via social media platforms.

## 6. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN / COMPLAINT

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE APPROPRIATE LINES OF REFERRAL ARE FOLLOWED**

### FOR SENIOR SCHOOL

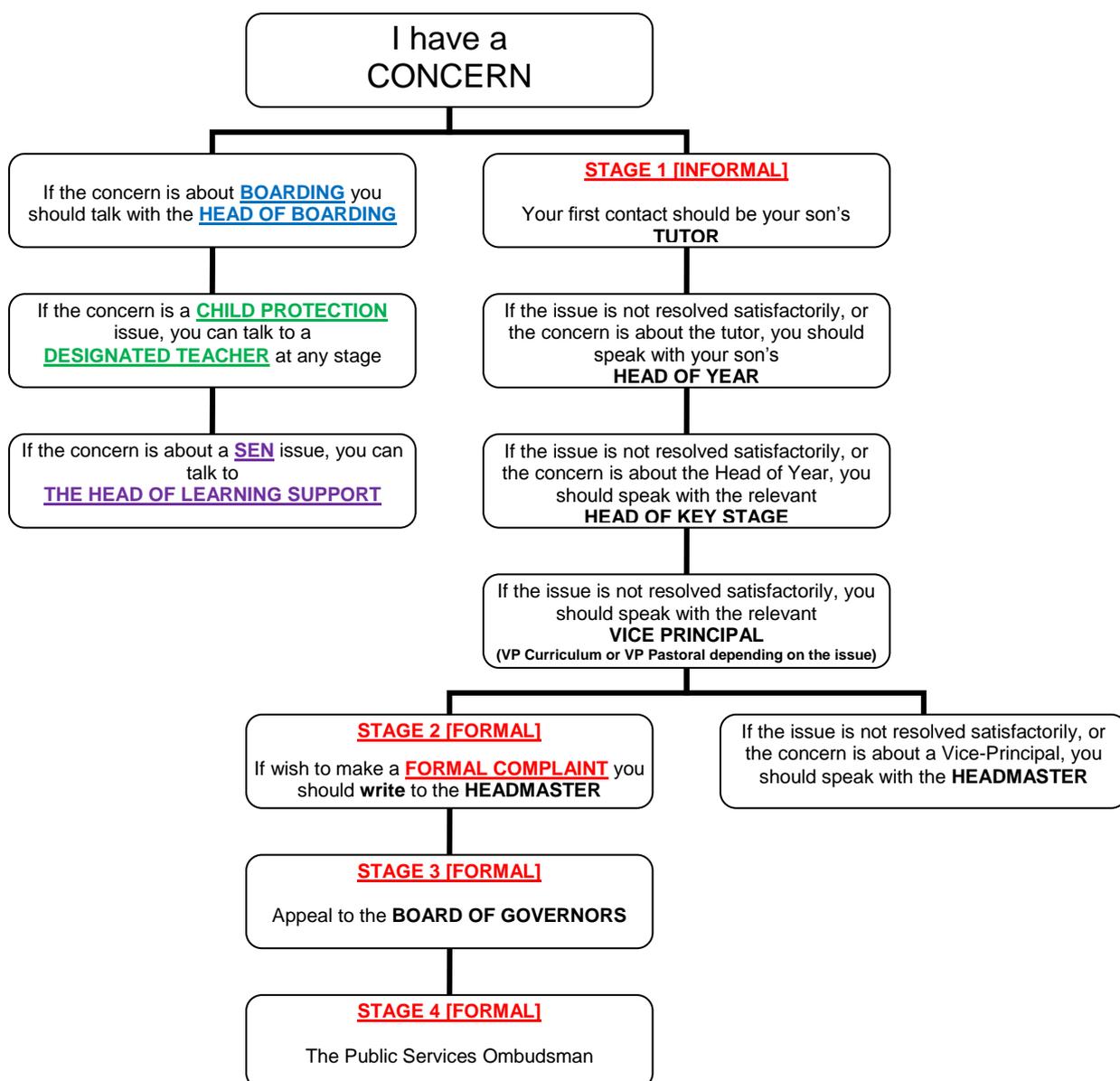
A TUTOR should be the first point of contact; however, a Head of Year may be contacted directly when it involves a pastoral or welfare issue.

The Tutor/HoY will try to deal with the concern directly, or advise on whom best to involve.

Concerns regarding Boarding should be referred to the Head of Boarding.

Concerns regarding the provision of Special Educational Needs should be referred to the Head of Learning Support.

Child Protection concerns should be referred to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.



## FOR JUNIOR SCHOOL

The TEACHER should be the first point of contact; however, a Head of Key Stage may be contacted directly when it involves a pastoral or welfare issue.

The Teacher/HoKS will try to deal with the concern directly, or advise on whom best to involve.

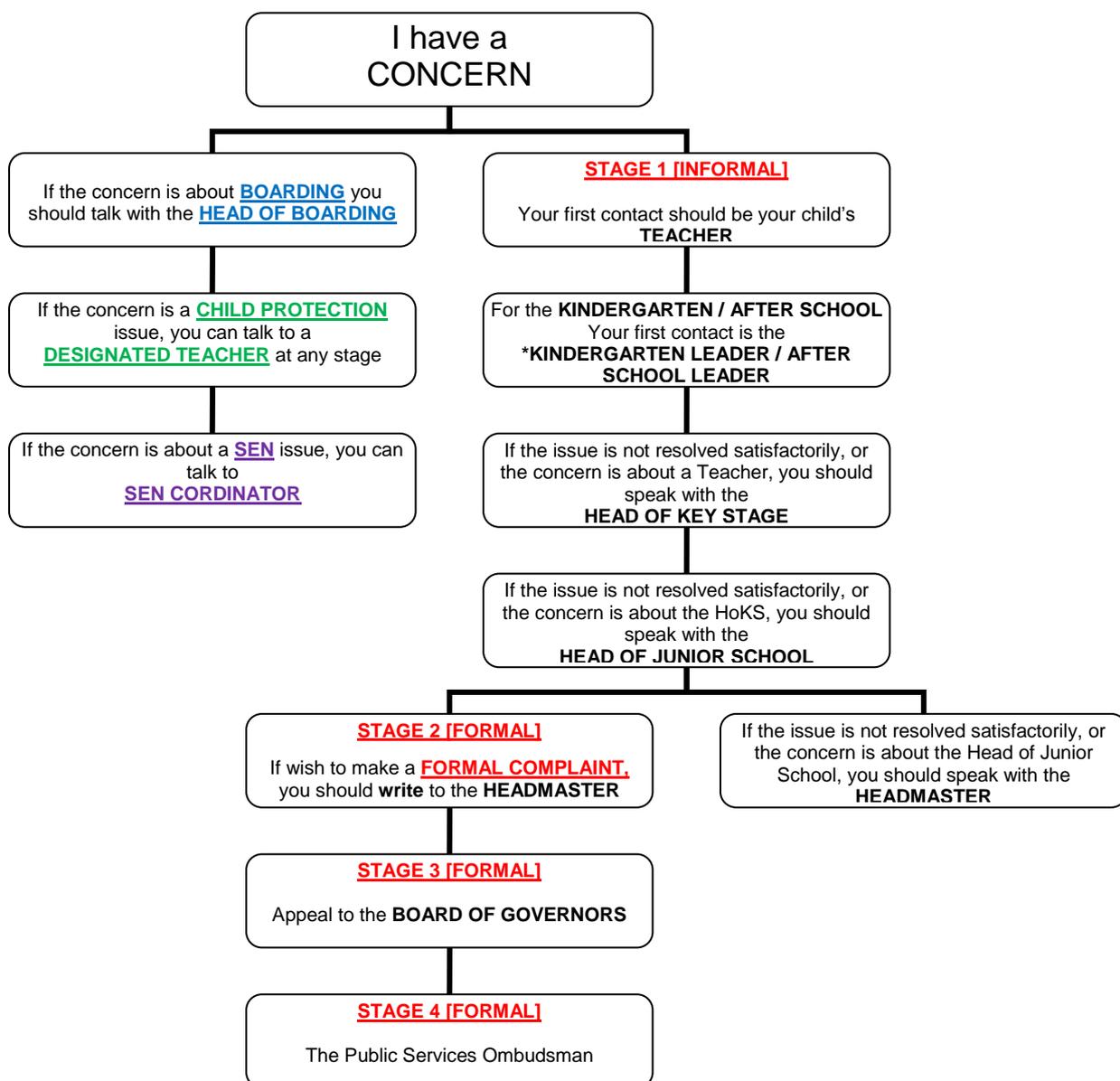
Concerns regarding Boarding should be referred to the Head of Boarding.

Concerns regarding the provision of Special Educational Needs should be referred to the SEN Coordinator.

Child Protection concerns should be referred to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

\* Concerns regarding the Kindergarten should be referred to the Kindergarten Leader. Where a complaint is relevant to the quality of care, fabric of the setting, or safeguarding and child protection within Kindergarten or After School Club, a parent may wish to contact the registered social worker for the setting at the Health and Social Care Trust Early Years Team.

[Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Early Years Services, Everton Complex, 585-587 Crumlin Road, Belfast. BT14 7GB. Telephone: 028 95042811]



## 7. STAGES IN HANDLING A CONCERN / COMPLAINT

Campbell College takes great care with the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents wish to raise a concern or make a complaint they can expect the following procedure to apply:

See section on the appropriate lines of referral.

### Stage 1 Informal resolution

- The first stage will normally be regarded as the raising of a **concern**.
- It is hoped that most concerns at this level can be resolved quickly and informally.
- **For SENIOR SCHOOL, the normal course of action would be to contact their son's tutor; however, a Head of Year could also be contacted in the first instance, if deemed necessary.**
- **For JUNIOR SCHOOL, the class teacher is the first point of contact; however, the Head of Key Stage could also be contacted in the first instance, if deemed necessary,**
- A record of the concern will be kept by the College.
- It is important to establish whether the person is asking a question, seeking advice, expressing an opinion or raising a concern, or making a complaint.
- **If the first point of contact cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult another appropriate member of staff such as a Class Teacher, Head of Department, Head of Year, Head of Key Stage, Head of Learning Support, Head of Boarding, a Vice Principal, Head of Junior School or the Headmaster.**
- Should the matter not be able to be resolved in an informal way, and every informal line of communication has failed, then parents are advised to proceed the complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

### Stage 2 Formal resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint **in writing to the Headmaster**
- The complaint will be acknowledged as soon as possible after receiving the written complaint and will indicate that the formal complaint procedure has been initiated.
- If the complaint refers to the Headmaster, the person should write to the Chair of the Board of Governors. If the complaint is about the Head of Junior School, the person should write to the Headmaster
- If requested, the complainant will have the opportunity to meet with the Headmaster/Head of Junior School (or designated deputy). The complainant may be accompanied to the meeting by a friend or relative; however, legal representation is **not** permitted at any stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster/Head of Junior School to carry out further investigations. Written records will be kept and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- The Headmaster/Head of Junior School will write to the complainant.
- It is hoped that parents will feel satisfied with the outcome, or that, at least, all of the concerns raised have been fully considered. If parents are still not satisfied they may proceed to stage 3.

### **Stage 3 Appeal to the Board of Governors**

- If a complainant is not satisfied by the Headmaster's/Head of Junior School's response they may write to the Board of Governors asking them to review the decision. A sub-committee of the Board may then be formed, if necessary.
- Receipt of a written request for appeal will be acknowledged in writing.
- All relevant correspondence will be sent to the sub-committee as soon as possible. The hearing will be arranged and any relevant personnel, the Headmaster and the complainant will be informed of the date, time and place of the hearing at least 5 days in advance.
- The Chairman of the sub-committee will ensure that its proceedings are properly minuted. The aim of the hearing should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- The normal procedure for the hearing will be as follows:
  - The Chairman will introduce all parties and explain their role
  - The Chairman will explain the purpose of the hearing
  - The complainant is given the opportunity to describe their complaint
  - Clarification may be sought by members of the sub-committee or by the Headmaster
  - The sub-committee will then take time to deliberate.
- The sub-committee will consider the complaint and the evidence presented and reach a decision regarding the most appropriate action to resolve the complaint and, where appropriate, make recommendations to change the school systems or procedures to try to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

The Public Services Ombudsman Act (NI) 2016 gives the power to investigate education authorities in respect of complaints made by a member of the public and would be considered when all avenues have been exhausted and where there has been alleged misapplication of policy.

## **8. RECORD KEEPING**

### **Record Keeping (Complaints)**

- Any record of a complaint will be held confidentially in the College
- All such records will be destroyed five years after closing in line with the College's Disposal Schedule. However, the College may keep records longer in the case of a contentious issue.

### **Record Keeping (Safeguarding/Child protection Issues)**

- The College acts in line with the disposal schedule of child protection records as provided by the Department of Education.

## **9. REVISION OF POLICY**

**This policy will be reviewed by the Leadership Team and Board of Governors at least every two years; however, the College may revise the policy at any time it considers necessary. The latest version will be available by contacting the College.**