



Campbell College Junior School  
*Concerns & Complaints Policy*

**Policy Revised:** August 2019

**Next Revision:** August 2020

# Concerns & Complaints Policy

## Kindergarten & Junior School

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### 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 Head of Junior School, in consultation with the Headmaster and 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 procedures will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure, such as Positive Behaviour, Safeguarding & Child Protection, Special Educational Needs, Anti-Bullying, Online Safety or Suspensions & 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 is resolved as soon as possible.

Doing so is good practice, it is fair to all concerned and it helps promote the confidence of the staff, parents and pupils in the College's ability to safeguard and promote their 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**

A concern is a query or anxiety or dissatisfaction with an aspect of the College's processes and procedures, which is raised or otherwise brought to the attention of the College and which is resolved informally.

#### **Complaint**

A 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.



# How to Raise a Concern or Complaint

I have a **CONCERN**.

I can talk to my child's **Class Teacher**.

## Concerns regarding Kindergarten or After-School Care

should be referred to a Kindergarten Leader (Mrs Wilson or Mrs Reid) or After-School Leader.

*If there is a concern about a Child Protection issue, I can talk to a Designated Teacher at any stage.*

If I am not satisfied, or the concern is about my son's Class Teacher, Kindergarten or After-School Leader I can talk to the **Head of Key Stage** (KS1: Mrs Jennings, KS2: Mr Bolingbroke).

If I am still not satisfied, or the concern is about the Head of Key Stage, I can talk to the **Head of Junior School** (Miss Brown).

If I am still not satisfied, or the concern is about the Head of Junior School, I can talk to the **Headmaster** of the College (Mr Robinson).

If I wish to make a **FORMAL COMPLAINT**, I can write to the **Head of Junior School** or **Headmaster**.

If I am not satisfied with the Head of Junior School or Headmaster's response, I can appeal to the **Chair of the Board of Governors** (Mr Ian Jordan).

If I am not satisfied with the Board of Governors' response, I can appeal to the **Public Services Ombudsman**.

Stage 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

Public Services Ombudsman

## Kindergarten & After-School Care

Where a complaint is relevant to the quality of care, fabric of the setting, or Safeguarding & Child Protection within the Kindergarten or After-School Club, a parent may wish to contact the registered social worker for the setting (Mairin McDermott) at the BHSCT Early Years Team, Everton Complex, 585-587 Crumlin Road, Belfast BT14 7GB. Telephone: 02895042811.

## 6. Stages in Handling a Concern or Complaint

We are committed to safeguarding the children who are entrusted into our care. However, if a parent wishes to raise a concern or make a complaint, they can expect the following procedure to apply:

### 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.
- The normal course of action would be for a parent to contact their son's Class Teacher. However, a Head of Key Stage could also be contacted in the first instance, if deemed necessary.
- A record of a concern or complaint will be kept by the College.
- It is important to establish whether the person is asking a question, seeking advice, expressing an opinion, raising a concern or making a complaint.
- If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary for the Class Teacher to consult with another appropriate member of staff, such as a Head of Key Stage, SENCO, Head of Boarding, Head of Junior School or Headmaster of the College.
- 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.

**Concerns regarding Kindergarten or After-School Care** should be referred to a Kindergarten Leader (Mrs Wilson or Mrs Reid) or After-School Leader.

- A Complaints Register is maintained to record all complaints and the steps taken to resolve them. This Register is available to the BHSCT's Early Years Team.
- Reports on the progress of the investigation of any complaints are provided regularly to complainants.
- Complainants are asked to read, sign and date the recorded outcome of any complaint, indicating whether or not they are satisfied with the steps taken to resolve the matter.
- Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are advised of other channels available to them to pursue their complaint further.
- Information from complaints is subsequently used to improve the quality of our service.

### Stage 2: Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of Junior School or Headmaster of the College.
- The Head of Junior School or Headmaster (or designated deputy) will acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible and will indicate that the formal complaint procedure has been initiated.
- If the complaint refers to the Head of Junior School, the complainant should write to the Headmaster.
- If the complaint refers to the Headmaster, the complainant should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors of Campbell College.

- If requested, the complainant will have the opportunity to meet with the Head of Junior School or Headmaster (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 Head of Junior School or Headmaster to carry out further investigations. Written records will be kept and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- The Head of Junior School or Headmaster will subsequently write to the complainant. This response will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.
- It is hoped that the complainant will feel satisfied with the outcome, or that, at least, all of the concerns raised have been fully considered. If the complainant is still not satisfied, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

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

- If a complainant is not satisfied by the Head of Junior School or Headmaster's response, they may write to the Board of Governors, asking them to review the decision.
- The Chair of the Board of Governors will consider the complaint and decide if it is necessary to form a sub-committee of the Board.
- Receipt of a written request for an 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 Head of Junior School, the Headmaster and the complainant will be informed of the date, time and place of the hearing at least five days in advance.
- The Chairperson 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 Chairperson will introduce all parties and explain their roles.
  - ▶ The Chairperson will explain the purpose of the hearing.
  - ▶ The complainant will be given the opportunity to describe their complaint.
  - ▶ Clarification may be sought by members of the sub-committee, or by the Head of Junior School or by the Headmaster.
  - ▶ Both parties will subsequently leave, allowing the sub-committee time to deliberate.
  - ▶ The sub-committee will consider the complaint and the evidence presented, and will reach a decision regarding the most appropriate action to resolve the complaint and, where appropriate, make recommendations to change College 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. A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the College.*

## **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 they 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**

- All persons involved in a meeting (whether in person or over the telephone) are expected to 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 College may request that the meeting progresses under these terms. The complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted by the Head of Junior School / Headmaster / Board of Governors 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 remarks 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 those 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 parents and staff on social media and recognize 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.

## **7. Timescales**

### **Concerns (Informal to any member of staff)**

The college will try to respond as soon as possible. However, due to teaching commitments, please allow 24-48 hours from initial contact. If the call is very urgent, please make this clear at the time of calling.

### **Complaints (Formal to the Head of Junior School or Headmaster)**

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within five school working days and a response normally made within twenty school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing by the Head of Junior School or Headmaster and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

### **Complaints (Formal to the Board of Governors)**

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within five school working days and a final response normally made within twenty school working days from date of receipt of the complaint. The response will be issued in writing by the Chair of the Committee.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within six months of origin of the complaint to the College.

## **8. Record Keeping**

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

- The College will abide by the directives set by Data Protection procedures.
- Any record of a complaint will be held confidentially in the College.
- All such records will be destroyed in line with the College's Disposal of Records Schedule.

### **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 for Northern Ireland.

## **9. Revision of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed by the Junior School Leadership Team and Board of Governors at least every two years. However, policy revisions may be made at any stage if it is considered necessary.

The latest version of this policy will be available on the College website or from the Junior School Offices.

