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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** On 1 September 2004, the Education Minister, Barry Gardiner MP, announced the appointment of a team to undertake a Statutory Inquiry into the events surrounding the sexual abuse of boarding pupils at Cabin Hill Preparatory School by a fellow pupil in 1992/93.

**1.2** The terms of reference for the Inquiry team were:

- . To inquire into the events surrounding the sexual abuse of pupils in the boarding department of Cabin Hill School by a fellow pupil during the 1992/93 school year.
- . To examine the arrangements for child protection which were in place at the time and how the Principal, staff, Board of Governors of Cabin Hill School and Campbell College and others responded to complaints made in January 1993 by pupils in the boarding department of Cabin Hill School, in the light of advice contained in the Department's Circular 1989/41 'Dealing with Child Abuse: A Guide for the Education Sector'. To examine how the Principal, staff and the Board of Governors responded to the complaint made to them by a parent, concerning the same incident, in May 1999 and subsequently.
- . To report its findings to the Departments of Education and Health, Social Services and Public Safety, including any lessons to be learnt which might have application for schools and child protection more widely.

**1.3** The members of the Inquiry team were:

- . Mr Douglas Osler CB KSG, Chairman, formerly HM Senior Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland;
- . Mrs Lynne Peyton, formerly Regional Director with NSPCC (NI) and an Assistant Director of Social Services with Southern Health and Social Services Board; and
- . Mr William Calvert, formerly Principal of Dalriada School.

## **2 SEEKING AND REPORTING EVIDENCE**

- 2.1** Shortly after the announcement that the Inquiry was to take place, public notices were placed in newspapers inviting contact from members of the public and from witnesses with evidence to offer. Letters of summons to interview were issued to certain individuals whose evidence was thought likely to be important to the Inquiry. Letters inviting oral or written evidence were sent to pupils and staff who were at Cabin Hill School in 1992/93 at their last known addresses. In addition, the Inquiry team had access to a wide range of files including those in the possession of the Department of Education (DE), the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). The Inquiry also sought additional written information from Campbell College through its bursar which was supplied as requested. Oral evidence was taken from former pupils of Cabin Hill School; current and former members of staff (both teaching and non-teaching) and school governors; parents of former pupils; police officers involved in investigating the allegations of abuse; representatives of the Northern Ireland Boarding Schools' Partnership; current and retired officers in government departments, the Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) and the BELB. A written submission was received from the NSPCC Education Adviser. More than 50 witnesses gave oral or written evidence to the Inquiry.
- 2.2** The Board of Governors and school staff co-operated fully with the Inquiry at all times.
- 2.3** In conducting interviews, the Inquiry team was aware of the distress which could be caused to several of the witnesses and their families when asked to recall the events of 1992/93. The team emphasised to these witnesses the formal role of the Inquiry but sought to conduct interviews in ways likely to encourage them to co-operate fully

with the investigation. The team is grateful particularly to the former pupils who were willing to revisit the events of 1992/93 in the interests of establishing the facts. The Inquiry arranged for counselling to be available to any young men who were upset by recall of distressing events from their school days.

**2.4** The Inquiry team has chosen not to identify individuals by name in this report. The witnesses have moved on in their lives and drawing attention to earlier experiences could be distressing for many of them and might have restricted their willingness to be frank at interview. This refers mainly to pupils at Cabin Hill School in 1992/93 who experienced, witnessed or knew of the abuse. They are therefore referred to in this report as Boy A, Boy B etc. The pupil who was subsequently charged with indecent assault and placed on the Sex Offenders Register was in a position of authority over younger boys in Cabin Hill School and is referred to as the 'dormitory prefect' in order to emphasise the importance of that relationship in the events which occurred. Otherwise, those who were in post at crucial times, in 1992/93, 1999 and subsequently are referred to by the post they held or hold. The following conventions will be used:

Headmaster:	Headmaster of Campbell College, who has been in post from 1987 to present
1993 Head:	Head of Cabin Hill School in 1992-93, who was in post from 1985 to 1996
1999 Head:	Head of Cabin Hill School in 1999, who was in post from 1996 to August 2004
1992 Chairman:	Chairman of Board of Governors from January 1991 to January 1993
1999 Chairman:	Chairman of Board of Governors from January 1999 to January 2001
2004 Chairman:	Chairman of Board of Governors from January 2003 to January 2005

### **3 EVENTS LEADING TO THE INQUIRY**

- 3.1** In May 1999, the father of Boy A, who had been a boarder at Cabin Hill School from August to December 1992, contacted the school with information that his son had revealed, first to a psychiatric nurse from whom he was receiving treatment, then to his mother, that he had been subjected to serious sexual assault on numerous occasions in a dormitory at Cabin Hill School. The father believed that thorough investigation of the alleged incidents would help his son's recovery and encourage the school to review its arrangements to protect its pupils. He also sought redress for what he believed was the school's failure to protect his son. The father's own investigations had led him to believe that his son may have been only one of several boys affected.
- 3.2.** Both parents met with representatives of the school, including the 1999 Chairman and the 1999 Head of Cabin Hill School, the 1993 Head having retired in 1996. There was no admission of culpability by the school and the governors reserved their position in case of legal action.
- 3.3** The allegations were reported to the police by the father of Boy A in June 1999 and a criminal investigation followed. The 'dormitory prefect' at the centre of the allegations made limited admissions to the police who reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). In March 2002, the DPP directed that prosecution would not be in the public interest and, in April, the 'dormitory prefect' was given an adult caution on the 2 counts of indecent assault to which he had admitted and was added to the Sex Offenders Register. One of his admissions referred to Boy B (see 7.2 below) and the second to Boy A whose parents had first brought these matters to light. They continued to seek redress from the school and initiated legal action. They also pressed successive government ministers to set up a Statutory Inquiry into the school's handling of the matter. They were supported in this by the NIHRC and the Children's Commissioner for Northern Ireland. In February 2004 the then Minister for

Education announced a decision in principle to establish an Inquiry when the civil action against the school was completed. In May 2004 her successor decided to proceed with the Inquiry without further delay and the Inquiry team was appointed at the end of August 2004.

- 3.4** The Inquiry team wishes it to be understood that its investigations went well beyond the allegations made by Boy A and that its conclusions are based not only on his evidence but on corroborating evidence from other boys enrolled at Cabin Hill School at the same time and from documentary evidence. However, in pursuing what it saw as the interests of Boy A, his family paved the way for an Inquiry to explore the full extent of the sexual abuse perpetrated at Cabin Hill School in 1992/93 and to learn about its effect on the later lives of several young men. By doing so, Boy A's family provided a means whereby other families and individuals could confront the past. On the other hand, evidence given to the Inquiry suggests that in following Boy A's interests, his father has on occasions imposed additional stress on other families involved.

## **4 CAMPBELL COLLEGE AND CABIN HILL SCHOOL**

- 4.1** Campbell College is a voluntary grammar school for boys, situated in East Belfast. Founded in 1894, it admits boarding as well as day pupils. Until boarding was restricted to the 11-18 age range and concentrated in Campbell College in September 2004, boarders were also admitted to the school's preparatory department, Cabin Hill School, which was founded in 1929. Unlike most grammar school preparatory departments in Northern Ireland, until June 2004 Cabin Hill School accommodated boys in the first 2 years of post primary education (years 8 and 9) as well as boys of primary age. In 1992/93 about 500 boys in the 4-13 age range were enrolled at the school, including about 50 boarders. The school prospectus states that "*boarding helps to develop confidence, community spirit, independence, social skills, cultural awareness and respect for others*".
- 4.2** Campbell College and Cabin Hill School are overseen by a single Board of Governors. The Board's chairman holds office for 2 years but governors have no specified term of office. Since 1993 there have been 3 standing committees: the Headmaster's Committee, the Finance Committee and the Estates Committee. The Headmaster of Campbell College attends all meetings of the Board. Until September 2004, the Head of Cabin Hill School also attended Board meetings as was required by his personal membership of the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools (IAPS) which is open only to heads of preparatory schools who are directly responsible to the Board of Governors, attend its meetings and have responsibility for the appointment and direction of their own staff. This arrangement is significant to understanding the handling of the events of 1992/93.

## **5 EVALUATING CHILD PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EARLY 1990s**

- 5.1** In evaluating the events of 1992/93, it was important for the Inquiry team to judge what happened and the way it was handled in the context of the reasonable expectations of that time. The members of the team were active then, before and since in matters of child care and education. Twelve years ago practice in child protection was sufficiently developed in the educational world and indeed in society at large for the behaviour discovered in 1992/93 to have been recognised as abuse and dealt with accordingly. The earliest government guidance on dealing with child abuse was issued in the early 1970s and has been regularly updated. Circular HSS (Gen 1) 1/75 ‘Non Accidental Injury to Children’ contained comprehensive multi-agency advice and required professionals to report concerns to Social Services.
- 5.2** All the former pupils who gave evidence, whether or not they had been aware of the abuse at the time, told the Inquiry that they and their peers would have regarded, and continue to regard, as totally unacceptable the type of sexual behaviour imposed by one boy on another which is the subject of this report. They did not regard it as *“normal experimentation”*.
- 5.3** It is true that more guidance on child protection has been issued and more training made available since 1992. Nevertheless, in 1992, guidance had been in place for a number of years and had been implemented in many schools. In addition, and the Inquiry team believes this to be important, there are professional standards which are not time limited or dependent on published guidelines but which it is reasonable to expect trained and experienced teachers, medical and care staff to understand and implement and against which it is fair to judge their actions.

- 5.4** The Inquiry noted that those who knew about the events of 1992/93 or who learned of them in 1999 were in most cases parents themselves and could therefore be expected to protect the children in their care or to react when they heard of the allegations according to the standards they would expect for their own children.
- 5.5** In looking back and evaluating what was done, or left undone, in 1992/93 and in 1999, it is important to be fair but not to make excuses. The Inquiry team believes it has achieved that balance.

## **6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT CABIN HILL SCHOOL: SESSION 1992/93**

### **The Head of Cabin Hill School**

- 6.1** The senior member of staff at Cabin Hill School in 1992/93 was the Head who had been appointed in 1985. He left the school in 1996 and had died before the allegations of sexual abuse became public in 1999. In 1992/93 he lived with his family in premises immediately adjacent to the dormitories. The terms of the Head's contract make it clear that he was responsible to the Headmaster of Campbell College and that was the expectation of the Board of Governors. However, the Head was described by witnesses, including the Headmaster, the 1992 Chairman and members of staff, as being unwilling to accept a subordinate role to the Headmaster with whom he maintained only the level of communication essential to liaison between the senior school and the preparatory school. The 1992 Chairman acknowledged that he was aware of this but chose not to intervene to insist on an effective line management arrangement between the Headmaster and the Head of Cabin Hill School.
- 6.2** In keeping with the requirements of his membership of the IAPS, the 1993 Head attended Board meetings and was directly responsible to the Board for appointing staff. A Board sub-committee for Cabin Hill School existed until the end of 1992 when the number of committees was reduced. Thereafter, matters affecting Cabin Hill School were dealt with by the Headmaster's Committee which the Headmaster of Campbell College and the Head of Cabin Hill School attended. Between meetings, the Head appears to have dealt directly with two particular governors designated by the Board to represent the interests of Cabin Hill School on the Headmaster's Committee.

- 6.3** The 1993 Head was described to the Inquiry by most of the witnesses who knew him as a private man, “*very much the headmaster*”, who regarded Cabin Hill School as his personal responsibility. He was jealous of its good name and of his reputation for managing the school effectively. A former colleague told the Inquiry that he “*communicated mainly by memo*” but staff could meet with him on matters of real importance. Others confirmed that his preference was to deal with and solve problems personally and he rarely took anyone else into his confidence. He was also described as meticulous in recording events in the school’s life. This led him to make handwritten notes, which were discovered some 7 years later, describing what he learned from boys in January and February 1993 about sexual abuse at the school, and the action he took. His decision to record these events and then file them in that way was in line with his normal practice of enclosing confidential information about pupils in a sealed envelope before attaching it to a boy’s file. His secretary confirmed that this was his practice with confidential information as teachers and others had access to the files.
- 6.4** In December 1989 the Department of Education issued Circular 1989/41 ‘Dealing with Child Abuse: A Guide for the Education Sector’ to all school principals and chairs of Boards of Governors. There is no evidence that the 1993 Head took any action to implement the guidance or that he was required to do so by the Board of Governors or the Headmaster of Campbell College, although the circular placed a specific responsibility on Board chairpersons of voluntary grammar schools to ensure that arrangements for reporting suspected abuse were in place. At that time neither DE nor BELB had in place any procedure to check compliance with the guidance issued by DE.
- 6.5** The 1992 Chairman confirmed that there was no procedure for DE correspondence of this kind to be tabled at Board meetings and that discussion of child protection issues does not feature in his recollection of his time as chairman. He took the view that the Head of Cabin Hill School, his wife, masters and the matron were

responsible for boarders and that management of these arrangements should be left to professionals. He had never visited the Cabin Hill School dormitories.

### **The housemasters**

- 6.6** The vice master (as the vice principal of Cabin Hill School was called) and senior housemaster lived on the school campus and had responsibilities in the daily life of the school as well as for boarders. They acted as housemasters of the 2 houses to which boarders were assigned. They took turns to supervise 'prep' sessions and to keep the boarders occupied between late afternoon and bedtime. They shared responsibility for individual boys as their housemasters. At bed-time, together with other resident boarding masters, it was their duty to patrol the dormitories and often the showers at intervals until lights out. One master was on duty each evening. The Inquiry learned that it was not the 1993 Head's practice to communicate to these senior members of staff confidential information about boys or their families. They confirmed that relevant child protection circulars were not brought to their attention.

### **The Head's wife**

- 6.7** The Cabin Hill School Prospectus for 1992/93 states that "*the health and care of the Boarders...are the responsibility of the Head's wife, assisted by the Matron*". In her evidence to the Inquiry, the Head's wife stated that she took a particular interest in the welfare of new and younger boarders, that she interviewed applicants for the posts of matron and assistant matron and in effect supervised their work.

## **Matron and her staff**

- 6.8** The matron had 2 assistants. Her team was responsible for the boys' health and hygiene and for their welfare particularly in the late evenings until bedtime. The matron herself worked a daytime shift until the boarders' teatime, then returned later to supervise their showering and preparations for bed. Thereafter, she usually left the premises and an assistant matron made the final rounds before going to bed. In case of emergency, an assistant matron was available throughout the night in a room adjacent to the dormitory of the youngest boys. If a boy needed help he was expected to waken his dormitory prefect who was the only boy with permission to leave the dormitory but in practice boys came directly to the matron's room. These arrangements were intended to ensure the safety of the boys until they were asleep and were broadly satisfactory. It would be unreasonable to have expected active supervision during the night when an assistant matron, a boarding master and the head and his wife were accessible on the premises. In addition, the doors to the dormitories were fixed in such a way as to prevent them being completely closed. This was to ensure that a member of staff would be likely to hear any noise.
- 6.9** The boarding arrangements in 1992/93 afforded little in the way of privacy. Former pupils pointed out that conversations on the only telephone available to them could be overheard by the Head in his adjacent office and that letters for home were left unsealed to be checked by staff. These arrangements made it unlikely that boys would communicate real concerns to their parents. There was little privacy for boys in their preparations for bed when the matron and her staff were present at showering and changing for boys up to the age of 13. The narrow beds in the dormitories were very close together although in some dormitories there was a short partition separating the heads of the beds. The matrons believed their job was to "*do anything a mum would do*".

**6.10** The matron at the time emphasised to the Inquiry her real concern for the boys in her care. She explained that she and her staff were on constant lookout for bruises on the boys' bodies, usually acquired at games, for signs of bullying or unhappiness arising, for example, from homesickness.

**6.11** The 1992/93 matron was appointed with some experience in caring but without any formal qualification, nor was she offered any in-service training in the course of her employment between 1978 and 1997. She was unaware in 1992/93 of DE Circular 1989/41 on child protection or of any other relevant guidelines. Neither she nor the assistant matrons had received any briefing or training in child protection at that time.

#### **The school doctor**

**6.12** A doctor who was a general practitioner in a local health centre was appointed by the Board as Medical Officer for Campbell College and Cabin Hill School and visited the school on 2 mornings each week irrespective of need. All boarders were registered as his patients. The headmaster, vice master, senior housemaster and matron's staff had the opportunity to bring to his attention any concerns about individual boys. In 1992/93 the doctor was not aware of circulars relevant to child protection issued to schools but had been aware of the guidelines on child protection procedures issued by Eastern Area Child Protection Committee (EACPC) and thought that a copy had probably been available at the health centre. He told the Inquiry that *"I wouldn't have consulted them [guidelines] unless I felt there was something to deal with."* He had had no formal training in child protection.

#### **Dormitory prefects**

**6.13** In 1992/93 there were 7 dormitories at Cabin Hill School, accommodating about 50 boys. One of the 2 dormitories of particular relevance to this Inquiry (Dorm 3) was

occupied by Primary 6 boys aged about 10 years. There were 10 beds of which 8 were occupied in the autumn term 1992. Each dormitory had a dormitory prefect, a boy aged about 13 in his last year at Cabin Hill School. Dormitory prefects were appointed by the Head and normally held the position for 1 term. During this time they would sleep not with their peers but in a dormitory of younger boys. The dormitory prefects were responsible for lining the boys up in the event of a fire alarm; contacting the matron in the case of an emergency overnight; ensuring the boys were up in the morning; reporting any disciplinary problem or informing staff if a boy seemed to be unhappy. They did not have disciplinary powers but could request punishment for boys. Former pupils confirmed that younger boys respected their dormitory prefects and *"would definitely have listened to them"*. One said *"I would have been in awe; I wouldn't have said 'boo' to them"*. Their appointments were announced at school assembly but the appointees were not given any formal advice about their role. In addition to the dormitory prefects each of the 2 boarding houses had a captain and vice-captain and 1 boy was designated as head of boarders.

- 6.14** The 'dormitory prefect' at the centre of this Inquiry had become a boarder in 1989 at age 10. In the autumn term of 1992, aged 13, he was head of boarders, house captain and dormitory prefect of Dorm 3, the P6 (10 year olds) dormitory. Some boys boarded 7 nights each week; others went home or to a guardian at weekends. As there were fewer boys living in the boarding house at weekends, they were reorganised into fewer dormitories on Friday and Saturday nights. So it was that the 'dormitory prefect' found himself on Saturday 30 January 1993 in a dormitory along with boys of his own year and the year below.

## 7 WHAT HAPPENED IN 1992/93 IN CABIN HILL SCHOOL'S DORMITORIES?

7.1 In April 2002, after an extended investigation and on the advice of the DPP, police gave an adult caution to the 'dormitory prefect' who admitted charges of indecent assault against 2 boys during the 1992/93 school year. He was placed on the Sex Offenders Register. That in itself establishes that there was indeed serious sexual misconduct in the Cabin Hill School dormitories at that time. The Inquiry team read papers, in particular contemporaneous notes by the 1993 Head and the matron, and files relating to the police investigation and interviewed witnesses in order to come to a view as to whether the charges referred to in the caution covered all that took place or whether there were further serious assaults, as has been alleged. ***The team concluded that there were multiple instances of serious sexual abuse affecting at least 6 boys between August 1992 and January 1993.***

7.2 It was revealed that, during a weekend in January 1993, the 'dormitory prefect' had made sexual advances to Boy B, 1 year younger than himself. He told the 1993 Head, the police and the Inquiry that, on the night of Saturday 30 January, when lying on his bed talking to Boy B, he kissed him and placed his hand inside his pyjama trousers and tried to fondle him. Boy B refused to co-operate and left the Dorm, meeting up with other boys whom he told about the incident. The following day this group of older boys approached the P6 boys in the dormitory in which the 'dormitory prefect' had slept during the previous term and discovered that several younger boys had been abused. Speaking of the intervention of the older boys, one of the P6 boys, Boy C, told the Inquiry "*I was just relieved it was all over*". The 'dormitory prefect' was confronted by the senior boys and agreed, under pressure, to confess to the Head. The Head was not available when the 'dormitory prefect' first went to find him on the morning of Sunday 31 January but the Head's wife took a note from him, which the Inquiry has seen. In it he sought an interview with the Head. The Head's wife arranged for the 'dormitory prefect' to return later. When he met the Head on Sunday evening, the 'dormitory prefect' was very distressed, and offered to remove

the insignia of his prefect status. He confessed both to kissing Boy B on the previous evening and to kissing on the mouth, and fondling the private parts of, several P6 boys in Dorm 3 during the previous term.

**7.3** At this point, the evening of Sunday 31 January 1993, the Head acted swiftly. He moved the 'dormitory prefect' to sleep in the sickbay and interviewed Boy B, who confirmed what had happened on the previous evening and said that he had informed his mother who, according to the Head's notes, "*appeared to have played down the situation and told him to keep away from the 'dormitory prefect'*". He also thanked the older boys who had confronted the 'dormitory prefect' for taking action to bring the matter to light but said that he was now dealing with it and warned them that they themselves should not take any punitive action of which, according to the Head's record, the 'dormitory prefect' "*was more afraid than anything else*". The removal of the 'dormitory prefect' did have the effect of protecting other boys as well as reducing the possibility of bullying and was the correct action at that time. The 'dormitory prefect' never resumed his duties with younger boys.

**7.4** The following morning, Monday 1 February 1993, was the day of the school doctor's routine visit. According to the matron, the Head sent for her during the morning and told her that there had been an incident in the dormitory involving the 'dormitory prefect' and Boy B. When the doctor arrived, the Head informed him also. According to the evidence of both the doctor and the matron, the Head made it clear that this was a confidential matter which he was handling himself. There was no discussion about sharing this information with others, for example, the relevant housemasters. The Head's own notes confirm that he wanted to "*treat situation as normally as possible*". The Head asked matron to drive the 'dormitory prefect' to the doctor's surgery later in the day for the doctor to have a "*man to boy*" discussion about the incident.

- 7.5** The meeting took place that afternoon in the doctor's surgery. When asked why matron was present at a discussion between 2 males on a subject likely to be embarrassing to the 'dormitory prefect', both the matron and the doctor cited the doctor's unwillingness to meet with any boy on his own. Matron kept a note of the discussion which was then given to the Head for his records. That note records that the 'dormitory prefect' admitted to the doctor several other approaches to a number of boys during the previous term: *"Dormitory prefect' then told about Dorm 3 last term, that on a number of occasions he had kissed boys in Dorm 3 and touched private parts of their bodies."* The matron admits that she then realised this was more serious than she had been led to believe but that the Head was dealing with it and it was not for her to intervene. The doctor, in his own words, *"cannot recall making any note of this meeting as it is likely that I did not consider the behaviour that I had been informed of to be sufficiently serious to warrant an entry in his [dormitory prefect's] records."*
- 7.6** The Head met the 'dormitory prefect' again on the afternoon of Monday 1 February. The 'dormitory prefect' had been upset because he had been subjected to verbal abuse earlier in the day by other boys who knew something of what had taken place. In this interview, according to the Head's notes, the 'dormitory prefect' made further admissions concerning the previous term, giving the names of younger boys he had abused and admitting that on several occasions he had kissed them on the mouth and kissed and touched their private parts. The 1993 Head's notes do not record any admission of interference with Boy A, although the 'dormitory prefect' was to admit to the police some years later that he had assaulted Boy A and was charged with an offence against him.
- 7.7** The Head then interviewed the boys from the P6 dormitory (Dorm 3) individually and recorded, in what he called, according to one, *"their statements"*, their accounts of sexual activity pressed on them by their 'dormitory prefect'. He did not interview Boy A, who had ceased to be a boarder in December 1992 but was still a day pupil at

the school. This was a serious omission. Several of the former pupils told the Inquiry team their recollections of these interviews at which they recounted the sexual abuse they had suffered. Boy D recalls being on his own, aged 10, his hands clasped behind his back while the Head sat across the desk recording what he said. He described this experience as “*uncomfortable, very belittling*” and was told “*keep it to yourself*”. The details he gave to the Head included kissing and touching his private parts. This is typical of the accounts heard by the Head and now accepted by the Inquiry. In his evidence to the Inquiry Boy D said that the ‘dormitory prefect’ had also attempted oral sex which he had resisted and had made him lie on his front and touched him from behind. He now believes that if he had not pushed him away the ‘dormitory prefect’, who was sexually aroused, would have attempted penetration. These sexual approaches had started as soon as he joined the school in August and persisted to the end of term when the ‘dormitory prefect’ left Dorm 3. In Boy D’s own words, the ‘dormitory prefect’ “*tried it on with us all*”.

- 7.8** Following these interviews on 1 February 1993, no further action was taken by the 1993 Head to contact parents, to provide support to the boys who had been abused, to refer the case to social services, or to investigate further. The Inquiry team is satisfied that he did not inform the Headmaster of Campbell College, or the vice master or the housemaster in the boarding house at Cabin Hill School, or the governors designated by the Board to represent the interests of Cabin Hill School on the Headmaster’s Committee. Scrutiny of Board and committee minutes and of the Head’s reports to these bodies shows no references to the incident. In the words of one witness, he “*closed it all down*”. The vice master and housemaster were aware, from rumours circulating in the school, if not from the Head, that the ‘dormitory prefect’ had attempted to kiss another boy. The Inquiry team considers that they showed a remarkable lack of curiosity in not asking for further information about matters affecting boys in their care but accepts their statements that any enquiry or involvement was discouraged. It is noteworthy, however, that they, as well as the matron and school doctor, gave evidence to the Inquiry that this was the only

occasion in their careers at Cabin Hill School when an incident such as kissing between boys was brought to their attention.

**7.9** It is the view of the Inquiry that those adults who knew that the 'dormitory prefect' had admitted to sexual activity with several younger boys, that is, the 1993 Head, the school doctor and the matron, were inadequate in their response. It is reasonable to expect that these professional and experienced individuals, particularly the Head and the school doctor, might have looked for published guidance as to what to do. They should have consulted with professional colleagues and sought advice from social services to ensure appropriate further investigation to discover the full extent of what had gone on; have shown concern for the possible victims as well as the needs of the 'dormitory prefect' himself; have ensured that parents were informed, asked to report anything said to them by their sons and given the opportunity to talk to their sons about these incidents. Their limited action prevented light being shed at the time on the true nature of what had happened in Cabin Hill School dormitories and may have led to long term damage to a number of former pupils who demonstrated to the Inquiry that, although they may have learned to put these experiences behind them, they still have the capacity to be upset by them.

**7.10** The Inquiry team accepts the evidence of the 1993 Head's notes and the testimony of witnesses that the sexual approaches of the 'dormitory prefect' were more numerous and more serious than he admitted to the police, although these were serious enough to warrant inclusion on the Sex Offenders Register which involves regular monitoring by the police. At the point at which the Inquiry team pressed the 'dormitory prefect' to confirm that he had abused more boys and more seriously than he had previously admitted, he became agitated and interrupted the interview to seek the advice of his solicitor. He declined to answer further questions beyond the limited admissions already made. He refused to confirm that he had sexually approached the other boys as admitted by him to the Head in 1993. His solicitor explained his client's refusal to answer by referring to paragraph 3 of Schedule 8 of the Health and

Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 which details the regulations governing Inquiries, namely that his client was not required “*to answer any question which he would be entitled on the ground of privilege or otherwise to refuse to answer if the Inquiry were a proceeding in a court of law*”.

**7.11** The allegations made by Boy A are the most serious of all. Some 7 years later, following a long period of mental health difficulties and behavioural problems, he alleged that, during the autumn term 1992, when he was 10 years old, he had been sexually assaulted by the ‘dormitory prefect’ on numerous occasions, forced to give and receive oral sex and raped on at least 2 occasions. These allegations have been largely denied by the ‘dormitory prefect’ although he did admit to the police that he had indecently assaulted Boy A and was duly cautioned. The Inquiry team is unable to establish the full extent of the abuse experienced by Boy A. His account follows the pattern of frequent, prolonged and intrusive assaults as experienced by other boys and goes beyond what others have admitted to have happened to them. Evidence brought before the Inquiry team leads it to believe that a more serious assault was perpetrated on Boy A than has been admitted by the ‘dormitory prefect’ or was suffered by other boys. The reasons for believing this are:

- . his account of the sexual abuse he suffered is similar in details to the evidence of other witnesses and the 1993 Head's notes;
- . immediately after leaving Cabin Hill as a boarder and becoming a day boy there, Boy A exhibited changes in his behaviour of both a physical and emotional nature;
- . the subsequent medical history of Boy A is consistent with earlier sexual abuse;
- . the comparative severity of Boy A's psychological and behavioural problems suggests that he suffered more serious abuse;
- . boy A referred to “*sex from behind*” in his very first disclosure to the psychiatric nurse (see 9.1 below) in a context in which, in the Inquiry's view, there was no reason for him to invent or exaggerate the allegation;

- . his medical and psychiatric reports confirm that his account of what happened has been largely consistent since he first revealed the details in 1999;
- . throughout his extensive therapy there has never been any suggestion or evidence that any abuse took place other than in the dormitory at Cabin Hill School although that cannot be established beyond doubt;
- . the 'dormitory prefect' admitted to the police that Boy A had been 1 of his victims although he had not confessed this to the Head in 1993.

**7.12** Following the revelation of the sexual misconduct by the 'dormitory prefect' he appears to have slept in the sick bay on 31 January 1993 before returning to a dormitory with boys of his own age group. Evidence to the Inquiry confirms that during the period up to his withdrawal from the school by his parents 6 weeks later he was unwilling to associate with the other boys, was subjected to verbal abuse and stayed indoors unless in classes. It was alleged by some witnesses, though disputed by others, that on the day he left he was followed out of the school building by jeers from his former classmates. The 'dormitory prefect' was himself a vulnerable teenager and required help in controlling his inappropriate sexual behaviour. Failure to refer him to the appropriate authorities meant that this help was not forthcoming.

**7.13** The 1993 Head's notes confirm that the 'dormitory prefect's' father, who was abroad, was not informed about the incident involving his son until Thursday 4 February 1993, 4 days after the event. According to the notes the father was given a "*bare outline*" of what had happened, and he told the Inquiry that he was informed only that his son had attempted to kiss another pupil. He said that the school doctor also made light of the incident when the father spoke to him. The opportunity for the 'dormitory prefect's' parents to help him was hindered by this lack of adequate information.

**7.14** A police witness confirmed that, had the 1993 Head been alive at the time of the police investigation, he could have been interviewed under caution for withholding information from the proper authorities in 1993 and referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

## **8 CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO EVENTS IN 1992/93**

- 8.1** The Inquiry team is satisfied that serious sexual assaults were perpetrated by the 'dormitory prefect' against several younger boys over whom he was in a position of authority. His admission to the police, his admissions to the Head in 1993, the notes made at the time by the Head, the evidence of the matron and the doctor and the vivid recall of the young witnesses establish this beyond doubt. The Inquiry team believes it to be more than probable that Boys A, C, D and at least 3 other boys were subjected to serious sexual assault.
- 8.2** Some of the former pupils who gave evidence to the Inquiry, including some of those who were abused by the 'dormitory prefect', remember Cabin Hill School as a happy place to which they show great loyalty and abiding affection. Boy C told the Inquiry of his despair and confusion at what happened to him in 1992 but wanted the Inquiry to know that otherwise he had "*loved*" Cabin Hill School. Boy E acknowledged that too little was done at the time to discover the full extent of the abuse but believed those who cared for him "*did their best*". For others it was not like that. Boy G recounted with difficulty his exposure at Cabin Hill School and Campbell College to years of verbal and physical bullying known to but not stopped by his teachers.
- 8.3** The fact that these incidents occurred does not in itself mean that dormitory supervision was inadequate. Staffing levels were appropriate and there was frequent, and appropriate, adult supervision and patrolling until the boys went to sleep. Usually, dormitory prefects would have come to bed later, after the younger boys were settled. Boy B describes the assault on him as taking place just after he had fallen asleep and Boy A recollects being assaulted in the early hours of the morning when everyone else was sleeping. If any boy had raised the alarm after lights out, even in the early hours, at least 1 adult was within earshot.

- 8.4** Given that level of supervision, some witnesses questioned whether the assaults had taken place, pointing out that none of the boys shouted out or reported the assault to an adult. The Inquiry has also considered this. Former pupils told the Inquiry about reporting other incidents to adults and calling for their help. However, when it came to talking about sexual abuse which they were too young to understand, they stayed silent. Boy C said *"I just gritted my teeth and wished it was over"*. That reflects an inability to put the experience into words at age 10 rather than an absence of help. Some of the boys suffered within days of arriving as boarders and were unlikely to make this their first approach to school staff. Boy A told the Inquiry that the 'dormitory prefect' had *"specifically told me not to tell. He was the Head of Boarders. I'd only been there a few weeks. What could I say?"* It is not unusual for sexually abused children to remain silent but when they do make allegations, as they did to the 1993 Head, they rarely lie.
- 8.5** The practice of putting an older boy in charge of boys as young as 10 in this setting was then, as it would be now, seriously misguided. The dangers inherent in that system were well known prior to 1992/93. In 'The Welfare of Children in Boarding Schools' (1991 HMSO), a publication it would be reasonable to expect all boarding schools to be familiar with, paragraph 6.48 urges awareness of *"both informal and formal relationships between pupils of different ages and the need to ensure that younger children are not abused by older pupils"* and, in paragraph 6.58, *"Bedtime routines and the use and management of dormitories should recognise the possibility that children are sometimes abused by other children."* The Board of Governors was ultimately responsible for allowing this practice to continue at Cabin Hill School without adequate risk assessment, guidance and supervision.
- 8.** The most likely way to prevent such assaults from taking place would have been to create a climate in which boys knew such activity would not be tolerated and to encourage boys to talk to a designated adult or anyone in whom they could confide. In 1992/93, Cabin Hill School had not taken appropriate action to ensure child

protection. Department of Education Circular 1989/41 'Dealing with Abuse: A Guide for the Education Sector' had been issued on 21 December 1989. Its address list included "The Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Governors of all Grant-Aided Schools". It was clearly directed towards "*advice and guidance on action which should be taken in relation to cases, or suspected cases, of child abuse encountered within the education sector*" (para 1). In dealing with sexual abuse, it refers to "*the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend*" (para 3). Paragraph 4 advises that "*A senior member of staff of each school should have designated management responsibility for activating the co-coordinating arrangements by notifying the local social services office and a designated officer of the Education and Library Board in the event of a case, or suspected case, coming to light within the school.*" It goes on to say that "*where the Principal is not the designated teacher he should be informed of any case that arises*". Further advice states that "*The Chairperson of the Board of Governors...should ensure that reporting arrangements are in place in the school.*" (para 7).

- 8.7** In Campbell College/Cabin Hill School there is no documented evidence in Board minutes, staff notices or training arrangements, or in the recollections of witnesses including the housemasters, the matron and the school doctor or, more significantly, in the actions of those involved, that the circular had been implemented in any way. The Board Chairman of the time has no recollection of circulars of any kind being drawn to his attention or discussed at Board meetings. The Headmaster of Campbell College confirmed that there was no designated teacher at that time in either school. The Bursar confirmed that when DE circulars were received, they were copied as appropriate to the Headmaster of Campbell College and the Head of Cabin Hill School and the originals kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- 8.8** Representatives of the school, including the 2004 Chairman of the Board of Governors, have argued that even if the circular had been implemented, it might not

have resulted in this incident being reported to the appropriate authorities, as the circular does not expressly mention sexual abuse by children against children. That argument is legalistic and, as such, unbecoming. Drafting of the advice by DE was indeed poor in that it appeared to limit sexual abuse to adult-child relationships and omitted to make direct reference to the kind of abuse experienced by boys in Cabin Hill School. It is unworthy of those who speak for the school to take refuge behind this excuse. The circular does include (para 3) the 'catch-all' phrase entitled "*Grave concern*" which refers to "*children whose situations do not fit any of the 4 categories above*". Other documentation current in 1992/93 makes clear that the threat of sexual abuse of younger by older pupils in boarding schools had been recognised. The school's argument is in any case irrelevant as the circular had not been studied or implemented in the school. Finally, professional judgement should have made it evident that serious sexual abuse had taken place.

**8.9** If the advice in Circular 1989/41 had been in place, child protection would have been in the minds of those in charge at Cabin Hill School. That might have ensured a different response in January 1993. It might not have stopped the abuse taking place but it would have ensured a thorough investigation at the time which might have brought the help clearly needed to those who had been abused and to the abuser. The interviews held by the Inquiry team revealed graphically the extent of the distress which recall of their experiences still causes these young men. It is the view of the Inquiry that the management of Campbell College and Cabin Hill School, both governors and senior staff, were at serious fault for their failure to act on contemporary guidance on child protection.

**8.10** As indicated above, the Chair of the Board of Governors and the school Principal have specific duties within DE Circular 1989/41. The Inquiry heard from several witnesses that in 1992/93 the Headmaster of Campbell College, though nominally senior, was not recognised by the Head of Cabin Hill School as his line manager. In February 1991, an inspection report described the relationship between the Head of

Cabin Hill School and the Headmaster of Campbell College as “*informal*” and advised that “*there is now a need to strengthen and make more effective the links between the schools*”. The 1993 Head's contract, dated 30 January 1985 makes it clear that “*subject to the overall control of the Governors, the Head shall be responsible to the Headmaster of Campbell College*”. However, the contract for the Headmaster of Campbell College makes no mention of any responsibility for managing the Head of Cabin Hill School. This flawed management system contributed to the failure of the 1993 Head to implement the requirements of Circular 1989/41. The Board was at fault in allowing it to persist.

**8.11** When the 1993 Head became aware of the 'dormitory prefect's' actions he acted immediately to prevent further abuse in the school and in referring the 'dormitory prefect' to the school doctor he showed his awareness of his need for support and guidance. However, in dealings with staff, pupils and the father of the 'dormitory prefect' he minimised the significance of what had occurred and his management style led to the incidents being “*closed down*”. That in itself may have deterred other boys from coming forward. Knowing even what they did, the other adults with responsibilities for the boarders should have been concerned to discover which boys were involved and the nature of any inappropriate activity. However, it was for the Head to seek appropriate professional assistance from social services and the police in investigating the incidents and providing support for the pupils involved and to inform fully the parents of both victims and abuser. If he had done so and secured them help at the time, the impact of abuse on the lives of a number of boys might have been reduced. His handling of the incident was wrong. He was an employee of the Board of Governors. They must therefore take responsibility for his actions. Indeed the 1992 Chairman of the Board told the Inquiry that the “*Head was in breach of proper behaviour*” in not telling him of the incidents.

**8.12** The 1993 Head's notes show that he was well aware of the serious nature of what had happened. Although he described the 'dormitory prefect's' behaviour to his

father as *“part of the growing-up process”*, he also writes in his notes that it had *“gone (a great deal) further than it should”*. Recording that he told the prefect’s father that his son could stay at Cabin Hill School, he also wrote: *“However, I pointed out that strong reaction from other parents might lead me to a different view.”* Boys B, C and E had already told their parents about the incident of 31 January and at least 1 other parent heard about it from her son as a piece of ‘news’. The 1993 Head clearly knew that other parents, if they found out what had happened, would not excuse these assaults so easily. It suggests at least that he knew his actions might be challenged.

**8.13** Even if the staff at Cabin Hill School were deterred from further investigation by the Head's management style, this did not affect the school doctor who had different professional loyalties and responsibilities. He should have followed the DHSS advice 'Diagnosis of Child Sexual Abuse: Guidance for Doctors', issued to all doctors in 1989. This guidance, which clearly defines child sexual abuse and includes reference to abuse by older children, emphasises the doctor's responsibility to share information and to keep proper written records. The doctor acknowledged to the Inquiry that he was aware of the EACPC's guidance but did not consider this case to fall within its recommendations as he considered it to be minor in nature. He told the Inquiry that he *“wished to make it clear that had I been made aware that any of my patients were (or were potentially) the victims of physical or sexual abuse I would have immediately brought this to the attention of the appropriate authorities”*. The issue is that he took no action to discover if any of his patients were at risk despite the ‘dormitory prefect’s’ recorded admission to him that other boys were involved. He should have done so by referring what he knew to the appropriate authorities. Following a complaint by the parents of Boy A to the General Medical Council (GMC) about the doctor's failure to follow guidance available at the time and report suspected abuse to the relevant authorities, the GMC issued a warning to the doctor in November 2004.

**8.14** It has been suggested that limited action was taken at the time because the incidents were little more than a “*normal part of growing up*” for boys. Indeed, Boy D recalls the headmaster telling him at his interview that boys of the ‘dormitory prefect’s’ age experiment so “*we will write it off and put it down to that*”. In evidence to the Inquiry, the 1999 Chairman and the school doctor reiterated this view. In the words of the 1999 Chairman, who regarded the claims when put to him as nothing more than “*boyish misbehaviour*”, “*These things go on in boarding schools and that’s it*” and “*With boys that age it is not untypical*”. Many managers of boarding schools would reject this view out of hand and so does this Inquiry. A former pupil of Cabin Hill School who had been a boarder and dormitory prefect a few years before this incident put it eloquently in his testimony. He stated his belief that what had happened was entirely unacceptable. He acknowledged that boys discuss amongst their own age group the ways in which their bodies change at puberty but declared that any actual physical approach, and particularly to younger boys, would have been unacceptable when he was at school in the 1980s. One of the senior boys, Boy E, who brought the abuse to the notice of the 1993 Head, told the Inquiry that his group would have taken no action if it had been no more than an attempted kiss on Boy B but when it involved younger boys, it had to be stopped. Another, Boy F, described the approaches to younger boys as “*disgusting*”. The Inquiry team has real concern that anyone in a position of trust or responsibility might believe otherwise then or now.

## **9 RESPONSE BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE RECEIVED IN MAY 1999**

- 9.1** On 21 May 1999, in the course of treatment at a specialist adolescent unit, Boy A, who was then 17 years old, told a psychiatric nurse that he had suffered serious sexual abuse including rape on several occasions when he was boarding at Cabin Hill School 7 years previously. His parents believed that this information explained the severe psychological and behavioural problems of their son over a number of years. Boy A confirmed to the Inquiry that this was the first time he had ever talked of what had happened and that the Head of Cabin Hill School had not interviewed him in 1993 about allegations of sexual misconduct by the 'dormitory prefect'.
- 9.2** Following his personal investigations involving other boys at the school at the time, Boy A's father contacted the then Head of Cabin Hill School who had been in post since 1996. He, of course, knew nothing of the alleged incidents but was able to establish from one of the housemasters the name of the 'dormitory prefect', who had been in his house. The vice master of 1993, still in that post, was unable to offer any additional information. The only relevant fact on the school file of the 'dormitory prefect', which was easily retrieved, was that he had left the school in March 1993 before the end of term. Subsequently, all the 1999 Head could establish about that abrupt departure was that the 'dormitory prefect' had "*become the victim of excessive teasing*". It is the view of the Inquiry team that the 1999 Head took the allegations seriously when they were brought to him, seeking to establish the limited facts available and also agreeing to speak to Boy A's psychiatric nurse.
- 9.3** At their request, a meeting was arranged between the parents, accompanied by their solicitor, and the 1999 Chairman of the Board of Governors, who was a solicitor, accompanied by another governor, who was a barrister, and by the 1999 Head of Cabin Hill School. The Chairman expressed his sympathy to the parents but told

them that the alleged incidents had happened 7 years previously and that no complaint had been made at the time. The 1993 Head of Cabin Hill School was now deceased. The meeting between Boy A's parents and the school representatives was inconclusive and the parents indicated their intention to initiate legal action. Despite the improved management arrangements between the Head of Cabin Hill School and the Headmaster of Campbell College by 1999, and the fact that the Headmaster had been in post in 1992/93, the Headmaster was not at the meeting. From that time on, voluntarily or involuntarily, he appears to have played no part in managing the school's response to the allegations. The Inquiry team finds this unusual as he was the senior adviser to the Board on educational matters. The 2004 Chairman explained to the Inquiry that because of the threat of legal action against the school, the complaint was dealt with "*very much on a legal basis*" and "*went to the legal side of the Board*". The 1999 Head of Cabin Hill School told the Inquiry that the 1999 Chairman had instructed him not to have direct dealings with the parents of Boy A following the meeting in June 1999.

- 9.4** On 8 June 1999, the parent informed the BELB of the allegations. The responsible officer informed the Chief Inspector of the Social Services Inspectorate and her chief executive and contacted the Headmaster of Campbell College. Her concern was to ensure the safety of pupils currently boarding at Cabin Hill School rather than to investigate the retrospective allegations of abuse, which would have been outside her authority. The school itself had not informed the BELB designated officer for child protection, social services or the police, as it should have done in accordance with current DE guidance. It should be noted, however, that the school authorities had advised the parents of Boy A to contact the police and that they were aware that Boy A had made his first disclosure of abuse in the context of treatment in a facility administered by the local health and social services trust.
- 9.5** On receipt of information supplied by Boy A and his parents, the Departments of Education and Health and Social Services and their respective inspectorates acted

immediately. Their concern was for the safety of pupils currently boarding at the school and they had no duty or authority to investigate allegations of historic abuse. On 10 June 1999, the 2 chief inspectors visited the school and met with the Headmaster of Campbell College and Head of Cabin Hill School. They proposed to the Headmaster that he should ask for an inspection of the school's boarding and care arrangements as they did not have powers at that time to insist on an inspection. The Headmaster responded immediately requesting an inspection which began on 17 June 1999.

### **The inspection, June 1999**

- 9.6** The inspection of the care and welfare of pupils in the boarding departments at Campbell College and Cabin Hill School took place in June 1999. The report was published in November.
- 9.7** That report, addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Governors, thus emphasising where ultimate responsibility lay, contained a substantial list of recommendations for changes to the boarding arrangements in Cabin Hill School. The evidence for these recommendations came in part from pupil questionnaires completed at the time. The recommendations, while complimenting the 1999 Head on his contribution to the school, include matters familiar to the Inquiry team from its investigations of the 1992/3 events, for example:
- . a review of the early morning and bedtime arrangements to ensure that the quality of the pupils' life, and the care routines, are influenced by the value placed on privacy, dignity, independence and choice;
  - . the need to introduce a system to monitor, evaluate and improve the care practices and to address those arrangements which have outlived their appropriateness;

- . the establishment of a forum for the pupils to discuss issues which are important to them and to hear a response to their questions or concerns, so that they feel that their views and opinions are sought and valued;
- . a refinement of the current system of recording and the establishment of separate records on the key activity areas such as sanctions administered, pupils' complaints, procedures related to accidents or incidents and the administration of the pupils' medication;
- . an appropriate programme of training and support on care issues for relevant staff.

**9.8** It is surprising that there is no evaluation in the report of the quality of the physical accommodation and furnishing of the dormitories. The Inquiry team pressed witnesses for descriptions of the boarding conditions at the time and visited the premises in October 2004, although, by then, boarding had been discontinued. The team's impression was of poorly furnished dormitories with no space for personal privacy or security of possessions and of rooms which were much too small for the numbers of boys sleeping in them.

**9.9** The follow-up report, published in June 2000, found *“significant improvements in the new arrangements and ample evidence of the prompt and effective action taken by the headmaster [that is, the 1999 Head] and his staff to address the areas for improvement identified in the report of the earlier inspection. Parents and pupils can be confident that the arrangements now in place will help to ensure a good standard of boarding provision at Cabin Hill.”*

**9.10** A further report of a general inspection of Cabin Hill School in March 2001 confirmed that *“The school's arrangements for Child Protection are in line with the guidance in the Department of Education's Circular 1999/10.”*

**9.11** Since 2001/02, the Registration and Inspection Unit (RIU) of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board has undertaken the annual inspection of the boarding departments at Campbell College and Cabin Hill School under Article 175 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The reports issued following these inspections have been positive, particularly in relation to pastoral care and child protection arrangements, though they suggest that the authorities at Cabin Hill School were slow to comply fully with some recommendations about privacy, accommodation and staff training. Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Governors show that they were being kept informed of, and discussing, the implications of these reports.

### **Investigating the complaint**

**9.12** On 11 June 1999, Boy A made a formal complaint to the police who opened an investigation. The outcome of that investigation has been recorded above.

**9.13** A strategy meeting chaired by social services and attended by police and BELB representatives was held on 7 July 1999. The meeting recognised that a number of boys might have been abused by the 'dormitory prefect' in 1992/93 but that there was insufficient information at that time to investigate further. Another strategy meeting on 30 November 1999, which was not attended by police, was inconclusive and made no recommendations. Since Boy A was now living in England, it was decided that there was no need for further meetings unless the police investigation uncovered child protection issues in respect of other boys.

**9.14** Some time after the allegations were first reported to the school authorities, the 1999 Head of Cabin Hill School, in response to a request from the police for access to documentation relevant to their investigation, carried out a search and found a sealed envelope which held his predecessor's handwritten notes on the events of January/February 1993. The 1999 Head told the Inquiry that the envelope had

become separated from the 'dormitory prefect's' file when pupil records were removed from filing cabinets and stored in boxes after the pupils had left school. The Inquiry believes the notes were probably discovered in 2000, about 12 months after the allegations were first made, but there is a lack of clarity about exactly when they were found, when they were passed to the 1999 Chairman and when the police were told that they had been discovered. On the instructions of the Chairman, the 1999 Head prepared a typed transcript which he gave, with the original handwritten notes, to the 1999 Chairman. A copy of the transcript was given to the police in November 2000. It was only after repeated requests and the threat of a court order that the original notes were given to the police the following year. The 1999 Chairman told the Inquiry that he feared the police would lose the originals.

- 9.15** These notes were, and are, the only written record of events in 1992/93 other than the matron's notes of the 'dormitory prefect's' meeting with the school doctor. They are extremely important. They include names of former pupils who suffered abuse at Cabin Hill School in the 1992 autumn term. Even after seeing these, the representatives of the Board did not acknowledge that serious abuse had taken place or accept responsibility. The 1999 Chairman gave the Inquiry the impression that he was unduly influenced by the school's insurers and legal advisers in this decision. Even when members of staff were interviewed by the police, the Board insisted on a governor who was a barrister being present.

### **Taking responsibility**

- 9.16** The Board's policy of rejecting responsibility for any aspects of the events of 1992/93 has continued for 5 years. The insistence on referring to the instances of abuse as 'alleged' despite the discovery of the 1993 Head's notes, the recall of staff in post at the time and the outcome of the police investigation was inept and insensitive. It should be noted, however, that although this report refers to the Board's response to the complaint, as the Board has corporate responsibility for the school, the evidence

presented to the Inquiry makes it clear that the Board as a whole was not fully or properly informed of the details of alleged abuse or the content of the Head's notes.

- 9.17** As recently as February 2004, following television coverage of these matters, the Board of Governors issued a press release containing erroneous and misleading statements.

The press release stated that:

- . *“Cabin Hill School has taken boarders for over 70 years. In that time there has been this 1 allegation of sexual abuse.”* and *“The events concerned...involve 1 pupil.”* As the Board knew from the Head's notes at the time and from the subsequent police action, there had been many incidents involving a number of boys in 1992/93 and more than 1 admission from the ‘dormitory prefect’, both to the 1993 Head at the time and later to the police.
- . *“Immediately on receiving the allegations in May 1999 the school asked DENI to carry out an inspection.”* As noted above, the school was contacted by the relevant chief inspectors who invited the Headmaster of Campbell College to write and request an inspection. Though strictly accurate, the statement of February 2004 is misleading in its implication that the initiative for the inspection came from the school.
- . *“The school inspection was completed in June 1999 and the report confirmed the school’s boarding arrangements as being absolutely satisfactory.”* Contrary to this statement, the inspection report drew attention to serious deficiencies in the boarding arrangements at Cabin Hill School and a follow-up inspection was conducted to ensure compliance with the report’s recommendations. An expert witness told the Inquiry that Cabin Hill School was slow in following up some recommendations about its boarding provision at this time and later.
- . *“As a result of the police investigating the allegation and interviewing the perpetrator of the alleged assaults a DPP direction of no prosecution was issued.”*

*The young man concerned received an adult caution and no further police action was necessary.” This statement omits to mention that the ‘perpetrator’ admitted 2 counts of indecent assault and was placed on the Sex Offenders Register. If the Board did not know the exact details of the police action, a formal approach to the police (as instigated by the Inquiry on the Board’s behalf) would have determined the facts.*

**9.18** The explanation offered to the Inquiry that these inaccuracies were the result of poor drafting done in haste following the television programme is simply unacceptable.

**9.19** In the minutes of the meeting of the Headmaster’s Committee on 30 March 2004 following release of that statement, 1 of the governors is recorded as saying *“he was very disappointed with a statement issued by the College to Ulster Television both in terms of its content and the fact that most of the Governors had not been aware of its existence until it was ‘leaked’ to a Sunday newspaper. All agreed that an error of judgment had been made and that lessons had been learnt. Proper communication in the future is essential.”*

The Inquiry agrees.

### **Making progress**

**9.20** Since 1992/93 there have been many important changes in both Campbell College and Cabin Hill School relating to the safety and welfare of pupils.

- . Since September 2004 Cabin Hill School has become a 4-11 preparatory school for day boys only. There is no boarding provision for pupils under the age of 11.
- . Since September 2004 the Head of Cabin Hill School has been part of the Campbell College management team and is accountable to the Board of Governors through the Headmaster of Campbell College.

- . Both schools now have robust child protection and anti-bullying policies and procedures, as required by DE Circular 1999/10 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection' and other guidance and teaching and non-teaching staff are reported to be receiving appropriate training.
- . There are now designated and deputy designated teachers for child protection at both Campbell College and Cabin Hill School whose task is to secure training for staff and take action if an individual child is at risk.
- . Structures are in place to encourage the young people to speak out about matters which are troubling them.
- . An independent inspection regime for pastoral care, including child protection arrangements, has been introduced for all schools, including annual inspection of boarding departments.

## 10 CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE RESPONSE TO THE 1999 COMPLAINT

- 10.1 The Inquiry accepts that when Boy A's allegations were first brought to the attention of the school authorities there was little substantiating evidence. Staff and governors who heard them told the Inquiry that they simply "*could not believe*" that the most serious of the allegations were true. The 1999 Head did ask colleagues what they remembered but got limited information. At that time, the 1993 Head's notes had not been discovered and many of the boys who had been at school in 1992/93 had left. However, given the serious nature of the allegations and the supporting evidence that Boy A had been severely affected by sexual abuse, it would have been right for the Board to satisfy itself that all appropriate steps were taken to establish the accuracy of his account of events and to discover whether other boys might have been similarly affected. Campbell College's own document 'Child Protection and Procedures' (November 1996), which was in force in 1999, states under the heading "*Dealing with Disclosures*": "*Always believe what the child is saying*". Nor is there any evidence that governors, the Headmaster or the 1999 Head considered or acted on guidance issued by DE in April 1997 and March 1999 in dealing with the complaint.
- 10.2 The later response of those members of the Board dealing with the complaint was even more deficient. Once the notes left by the 1993 Head came to light, there was at least circumstantial evidence relating to Boy A's allegations. These notes confirmed that indecent assault had taken place, named boys involved and identified the same 'dormitory prefect' as had been named by Boy A. On the basis of this information, which made it much easier to establish the facts and determine responsibility, the school in co-operation with social services as appropriate, should have informed parents and offered support to former pupils who had been affected by these events when under the protection of Cabin Hill School. Some of these pupils were later contacted by the school's solicitors, not to offer them counselling but to ask them to give evidence in relation to the legal action taken against the school.

- 10.3** The Inquiry considers that the decision to take no action to satisfy himself concerning the welfare of former pupils of Cabin Hill School who might have been affected by abuse was a serious failure on the part of 1999 Chairman. This decision contributed to the allegations being unresolved for many years and having a recurring adverse effect on the lives of numerous young men every time there was a legal approach to them, coverage in the media or an invitation to give evidence, for example, to the Inquiry. The Inquiry was sensitive to this issue. The failure to involve the Headmaster of Campbell College in follow-up action is hard to understand and deprived the Board of his professional advice. The failure to keep all governors fully informed of such a significant matter prevented the airing of views which might have challenged the way in which matters were being handled.
- 10.4** There was a pattern of rebuttal in the face of extensive evidence. Even when it became known in 2002 that the police had charged the 'dormitory prefect' who had admitted indecent assaults on 2 pupils, this attitude persisted. In February 2004, the seriousness of these assaults was still being misrepresented in the Board's press release. The desire to exonerate the school took precedence over concerns for the current physical and emotional health of the former pupils who might have been abused when in the school's care.
- 10.5** The inspection reports and the school's active response to them did much to address the problems at Cabin Hill School and to ensure improved attention to child protection guidelines. The 2004 Chairman, together with the Headmaster and Head of Cabin Hill School, is taking these issues very seriously in spirit as well as in compliance with the appropriate guidelines. The Inquiry team discussed with the Headmaster and other staff and with relevant regulatory bodies several incidents of actual and suspected abuse (including bullying and sexual abuse) which were drawn to their attention by witnesses or were mentioned in relevant files. The school appears to be developing responsive, open and effective means of investigating any

incidents of bullying or suspected sexual abuse and this is confirmed in respect of the boarding department by the reports of the annual inspections since 2001.

- 10.6** It is time for all the governors of Campbell College to have full access to all the facts surrounding the sexual abuse which took place in Cabin Hill School in 1992/93 and the school's response following the revelations in 1999/2000. They should take back responsibility as a corporate body for the response they make to this report and to those young men who were in the care of their predecessor Boards when these events took place.

## 11 RECOMMENDATIONS

**11.1 *This Inquiry demonstrates the need, not so much for more or different guidance on child protection in schools, as for greater understanding of and fuller compliance with existing guidance and with principles of good management.***

In particular, the lessons to be learned are these:

- . All parties should be familiar with and follow the relevant professional and inter-agency guidance.
- . The best interests of the child should be at the centre of any action taken.
- . Effective school management, including management of child protection, requires clear definition of roles and responsibility, clear lines of accountability and good communication between staff, governors, parents and outside agencies.

The specific recommendations of the Inquiry are as follows:

### **11.2 To Campbell College**

The Board of Governors of Campbell College should publicly acknowledge:

- . that a number of pupils in the boarding department at Cabin Hill School in 1992/93 suffered sexual abuse by a dormitory prefect;
- . that the action taken by the Head of Cabin Hill School on the basis of the

- . information available to him in 1993 fell short of good professional practice;
- . that the school's management arrangements in 1992/93 failed to ensure the implementation of the child protection guidance which, if in place and followed, should have led to the appropriate involvement of parents, a thorough investigation by the proper authorities, and the provision of support for pupils who suffered abuse and for the abuser;
- . that the response of the school authorities to the allegations of sexual abuse brought to their attention in May 1999, particularly following the discovery of the notes made by the 1993 Head of Cabin Hill School, was lacking in openness and sensitivity to the needs of pupils who alleged abuse or were known to have been abused or to have been at risk of abuse in 1992/93 and ignored the rights of their parents to be told.

The Board of Governors of Campbell College should build on the improved practice and procedures now in place in the school and continue to give high priority to the implementation and evaluation of effective child protection and anti-bullying strategies and procedures at the school.

### **11.3 To All Schools**

***Many of these recommendations are reminders to follow existing good practice.***

#### **School Child Protection Policies and Procedures**

- . Copies of DE Circular 1999/10 (or any DE guidance on child protection which replaces it) and of the individual school's child protection policy and procedures should be issued to all newly appointed governors, teachers and support staff.
- . Boards of Governors should receive a termly report from the designated teacher on the application of the school's child protection procedures and

should review annually the policy and procedures in the light of an audit of compliance with statutory requirements and published guidance.

### Child Protection Training

- . The induction programme for all new school staff (both teachers and support staff) and volunteers should include child protection training and there should be regular refresher training for all staff (at least once every 2 years).
- . The designated teacher should maintain a record of the attendance of teaching and support staff and volunteers at child protection training and report any issues to the Board in a termly update.
- . The Principal, Chair of Governors and at least 1 other governor of each school should receive appropriate and up-to-date child protection training commissioned or provided by ELBs with refresher training at least once every 4 years.
- . All child protection training should include reference to the difficulties experienced by many children in disclosing abuse, the possible long term effects of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, the support available for victims of child sexual abuse and the need to consider the possibility that there may be other victims when a case of sexual abuse is identified or suspected. Training should also include identifying and responding to young people who abuse.

### Reporting / Referral of Child Abuse

- . Self evident as it may seem, school authorities **must** take seriously any allegation of abuse, including historic allegations, and **must** follow the guidelines on reporting and referral set out in DE Circular 1999/10.
- . Having reported concerns to the appropriate authorities, the designated teacher should attend relevant strategy discussions and case conferences and should liaise with a senior social worker/senior police officer regarding the progress in the case.

### Guidance to Pupils

- . Schools should give all children, and in particular all pupils in boarding departments, clear guidance about their rights including the right not to be touched inappropriately and how to respond to any attempt to do so, whether by an adult or by another child or young person.
- . Schools should inform all children, and in particular all pupils in boarding departments, of a range of persons (including agencies outside school such as social services, ChildLine or NSPCC) to whom they may express any complaint or concern about abuse, bullying or inappropriate touching.
- . In recognition of the difficulties children have in talking about experiences of being sexually abused, schools should give consideration to providing in-school counselling services so that pupils can bring concerns to independent counsellors in confidence.

### Arrangements in Boarding Departments

- . Pupils who are given responsibility for the supervision of younger boys and girls must be given appropriate guidance and support, and must be adequately supervised and monitored by adults in the discharge of their responsibilities.
- . Older pupils should not share dormitory accommodation with younger pupils in school boarding departments.

### DE Correspondence

- . Boards of Governors should put in place procedures to ensure that they are informed promptly of all relevant DE correspondence and have the opportunity to discuss it.

## **11.4 To the Department of Education**

- . DE should put in place appropriate means to ensure full compliance with its

guidance to schools on child protection.

- . The planned revision of DE Circular 1999/10 should include guidance to schools on how to respond to allegations of abuse relating to former pupils and staff, and on dealing with young people who exhibit sexually harmful behaviour.