

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**Stephen CAMPBELL**

1. My name is Stephen Campbell. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1970. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### **Career to date**

2. I obtained a BSc from Glasgow University in 1990. Subsequent to that I obtained a PGCE from St Andrew's College of Education in 1991. After obtaining my PGCE I had a role as a Census Processing Officer between September and December 1991. Subsequent to that I went to New College School Oxford. I was there between January 1992 and June 1994. I started with Merchiston Castle School in the summer of 1994. I have held a number of different roles during my time there. I left for another teaching role with a different school in August 2020.

### **Merchiston Castle School**

#### *Application process for Merchiston Castle School*

3. I applied to become a teacher in Mathematics at Merchiston Castle School in 1994. I don't remember much detail surrounding my application for the role as it was more than twenty six years ago. However, I do recall that I was interviewed and required to present originals of my qualifications as part of the application process.

*Roles and responsibilities at Merchiston Castle School*

4. I started at Merchiston in my new role as a teacher in Mathematics in 1994. Albeit I have had a number of roles with the school I have always taught Mathematics during my time there. In 2004 I was promoted to Second in Department. In 2007 I was promoted to Head of Department. In 2011 I became the Assistant Head of Academic. In January 2015 I became Deputy Head of Academic. As part of that role I had responsibility for arranging class cover when members of staff were absent.
5. Deputy (and indeed Assistant) Heads have always had suffixes such as "Academic" or "Pupil Support." Those titles denote responsibility in specific areas. The move to the establishment of a Pupil Support Leadership Team is something in which I was involved as part of the wider School Leadership Team when I became Deputy Head of Academic in 2015.
6. Many staff members have resided, and do reside, on campus in a variety of locations and accommodations. I myself lived above Pringle Boarding House between 1994 and 1999. The only staff members who have access to the children's residential areas are those who have a pastoral role such as housemasters and tutors.
7. I never had a leadership role in a pastoral sense within Merchiston. However, every teacher who is at Merchiston is also a tutor and there is a pastoral element to that role. That role is pretty much the same across the school in terms of the boarding houses. One teacher, in their capacity as a tutor, is on duty per week per boarding house. The role involves going into the houses and supervising prep, sometimes supervising activities and sometimes becoming involved in trips at weekends. The tutor's role is essentially to be an extra pair of hands on the ground.

## **Training, supervision and recruitment of staff throughout my time at Merchiston**

### *My line managers, supervision and continued development*

8. During my role as a teacher in Mathematics I was line managed by the Head of Maths and Second in Department, which was Peter Arter and Marion Muetzelfeldt. I continued to be line managed by Marion Muetzelfeldt in my roles as Second in Department, Head of Department, and Assistant Head of Academic. Throughout my time as Deputy Head of Academic I was line managed by the Headmasters at Merchiston. Initially that was Andrew Hunter. When Andrew Hunter left he was replaced by Jonathan Anderson.
9. Liaison with my line managers has been a daily occurrence throughout my career. I have undertaken PRD and CPD regularly in line with GTCS professional standards. I undertook a wide range of internal and external preparation, training and mentoring for all of my roles. That was principally led, and encouraged by, my line manager, Marion Muetzelfeldt.

### *Supervision and training of staff members I have line managed*

10. Following my various promotions I line managed other staff members. Part of my role as Head of Department was to do annual CPD and PRD with teachers. As Deputy Head of Academic, I did the same with the Heads of Departments.
11. I was involved in training and the personal development of staff who were on their probation as well those who were permanent appointments. In my roles as Head of Department and Deputy Head of Academic I undertook annual reviews and was involved in the development of staff. This has included CPD recommendations of teachers when I was Head of Department. This continued in my roles as Head of Department and as Deputy Head of Academic.

*Involvement in recruitment of new staff*

12. I was involved in the recruitment of staff at the school. This involvement only extended to academic appointments. As far as I am aware there was a process for processing all applications to the school. That would be undertaken by the HR department or the Headmaster's secretary.
13. The school took both written and verbal references for each candidate for new roles. When I was Head of Department, I was responsible for verbal academic references from referees. It was my responsibility to phone up the candidate's second referee, who was usually their line manager or Head of Department, to obtain the reference. My role was exclusively to seek views on the academic side of applications from the applicant's second referee. Obtaining verbal references at that stage allowed us to take a view from outside sources on the candidate's teaching ability and so on. As far as I am aware all referees were actually spoken to. Certainly, I always spoke to second referees when required.
14. There were a variety of panels which candidates were interviewed by during the recruitment process. There was pupil panel, a Headmaster panel, an academic panel, a pupil support panel and a panel of people involved with the pastoral side of things. It was tough process for candidates. Each candidate would have four or five interviews covering all the areas that each panel were assigned to cover.
15. In my capacity as Deputy Head of Academic I took part in interview panels. My role was only really to be involved with the panel which would be considering the academic side of things. Virtually all of the candidates I was involved with were those who were academic staff rather than pastoral staff. Sometimes certain Housemasters who were candidates also had a subject specialism. In those cases I sometimes became involved with the academic side of the interview.
16. As far as I am aware consideration was given to child protection issues during the recruitment process. I was never in an interview where that side of things was covered because I was only in the interviews that covered the academic side of

things. I think probably the people who would cover the pastoral and child protection side of things would have been the Headmaster or one of the Deputy Headmasters. It would have been people like Andrew Hunter, Alan Johnston or Peter Hall.

17. All other aspects of recruitment were initially looked after by the Headmaster's Secretary and latterly by HR. From my perspective I believe that the recruitment policies and practices the school had in place were robust.

### **Policy and child protection arrangements**

18. My involvement in strategic planning was always related to my remit, which was pretty much exclusively on the academic side. My role was in line with the leadership structure under which the school was run.

#### *Child protection arrangements*

19. Merchiston had in place written policies surrounding childhood protection arrangements to reduce the likelihood of abuse, ill-treatment, or inappropriate conduct by staff, or other adults, towards children at the school. There was regular training and updates surrounding childhood protection. To the best of my memory, there was always a named Child Protection Co-ordinator. To the best of my knowledge, as a member of staff, colleagues always followed child protection policies and procedures.
20. During my time at the school I never had any ongoing involvement in, or responsibility for, policy in relation to the care, including residential care, of children. However, staff, including managerial staff, were given guidance and instruction on how children in their care at the school should be treated, cared for and protected against abuse, ill-treatment or inappropriate behaviour towards them from staff, other adults, or fellow pupils. This was achieved through regular in-service training and updates, written policies and the staff handbook. Guidance and instruction on how to handle, and respond to, reports of abuse or ill-treatment of children by staff, other

adults, or fellow pupils was obtained through regular in-service training and updates, written policies and the staff handbook.

21. As far as wellbeing and child protection policies were concerned they were always expected to be applied in the classroom. In my experience, complete autonomy, including discretion, was given to staff, including managerial staff, in relation to these matters. Staff members were always encouraged to report abuse or ill-treatment of young people.

#### *Whistle-blowing policy*

22. There was, for many years, a whistle-blowing governor whom members of staff could approach at any time. The whistle-blowing governor was a member of the board of governors. I think you could raise anything you wanted to with regards to things you viewed as amiss with the leadership of the school. I think that the whistle-blowing policy was basically there for persons to raise any concern they had that they felt couldn't ultimately be dealt with by the Headmaster of the school. That was my understanding of the policy when I was at the school. There wasn't a situation where I ever considered whistle-blowing myself. I was never involved with anything along those lines. I am not aware of any occasion where someone approached the whistle-blowing governor.

#### **Records and record keeping**

23. In my experience as a senior leader, from January 2015 onwards, processes surrounding record keeping were always robust. I am unable to comment fully on what happened before 2015. I know from my experiences of working with Andrew Hunter that he was very meticulous in his record-keeping.

## **Inspections**

24. There were inspectors and other officials who visited the school. Merchiston worked closely with Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland. I believe that when inspectors came in they spoke to the children individually and as part of a group. As far as I am aware, sometimes staff were present and at other times they were not. I was only spoken to by inspectors and external officials in the context of learning and teaching. Feedback was provided and detailed in the inspection reports that they produced.
25. The school was the subject of concern between 2014 and 2017 concerning the way in which children and young people were being treated. There were concerns surrounding the suicide of a colleague by the name of James Rainey Brown and subsequently the conduct of others. That led to inspectors taking a closer look at the school's arrangements in the areas of wellbeing and child protection. It is my perception that throughout that process the school was open and transparent in its communications with the parental body.

## **Discipline and punishment**

26. All staff members were expected to be fully professional in their approach to discipline. Children were made aware of expectations in classrooms and in boarding houses. Discipline and punishment could be in the form of written impositions (done on blue papers), detentions, suspension or exclusion. Disciplinary incidents were recorded by housemasters.
27. There was a policy in relation to discipline and punishment. There was a comprehensive policies booklet containing all of the information surrounding the school's approach to discipline and punishment. That policies booklet was updated and shared annually with all stakeholders. Stakeholders included pupils, parents and staff members.

28. Fagging has never existed amongst the pupils. In my experience, the extent that discipline was the responsibility of senior pupils was that prefects would occasionally ask staff members for help if younger pupils presented challenging behaviour.

**Abuse in Merchiston – specific incidents witnessed or heard of by me**

29. I do not know if any person who worked at the school was convicted of the abuse of a child or children at the school. However, there are two incidents where I was that were reported following allegations being made.

*Unnamed [REDACTED] coach*

30. Some years ago I acted as a witness to a conversation between Alan Johnston, who was at that time Senior Deputy Head and held the roles of Child Protection Co-ordinator and Deputy Head Pupil Support, and a [REDACTED] coach. I do not recall the specific date but it was possibly around 2016. The allegation concerned inappropriate touching. I do not recall the outcome of this specific investigation. I was merely the witness to the interview. I do know that the coach no longer works at the school.

*James Rainy Brown*

31. James Rainy Brown was a Maths and Science teacher with the school. I was at the school at the same time as him between 1994 and 2013. I do not know how old he was during the time he was at the school at the same time as me. Although he was a very private man I knew him reasonably well professionally. I remember him being an older member of staff who was committed to the school. He was hard working and traditional in his approach to teaching. When I saw him with children he seemed to be pleasant and humorous with them.
32. I never directly saw him discipline or abuse any of the children. However, I do recall one incident over twenty years ago which I ended up reporting to the housemaster. I



remember the main facts but I do not recall much detail. I was on duty in the Pringle Boarding House one evening. In those days, Scripture Union was a weekly activity run by James Rainy Brown. It took place in the dayroom after "lights out" and it was well attended. Whilst patrolling the corridors, as duty tutors were expected to do, I became aware of a commotion in the dayroom and a child ran out of the door carrying his duvet. The boy was naked. I don't remember the name of the boy involved.

33. I immediately reported what I witnessed to the housemaster, Peter Hall, who intervened to bring the Scripture Union meeting to an end. I am absolutely certain that I raised my concerns surrounding the incident I witnessed at that time. Having reported the incident to the housemaster, I left him to deal with the matter and heard nothing more of it. There was never anything like a meeting, or anything like that, subsequent to me reporting my concerns.
34. Merchiston is a place where you hear things. Around about the same time as the time I witnessed the boy running naked from the room I heard allegations surrounding James Rainy Brown and "naked apple dooking." I couldn't say where I picked that rumour up from. I think the allegation was that James Rainey Brown would do this straight after the boys had their showers and before they got dressed. It was that type of thing. It was never anything that I saw myself. Clearly, if that behaviour was going on it was pretty inappropriate behaviour. I am sure that the rumours concerning naked apple dooking would have been raised with Peter Hall at that time.
35. It is difficult for me to have a view in hindsight as to how things were handled because I don't know what was done following me reporting what happened to Peter Hall. I passed it up the chain, as I was supposed to do, and heard nothing further of it. Obviously James Rainey Brown wasn't fired. In hindsight, from the perspective of this day and age, he should have probably been fired. It probably wasn't right that he was allowed to remain at the school.

**Specific allegations of abuse against individuals highlighted to me by the Inquiry**

36. I understand that the Inquiry has received evidence of allegations about staff and others who may have been employed at the school at the same time as me.

DXP [REDACTED]

37. DXP [REDACTED] was a former colleague of mine who was at the school between 1994 and his retirement. He was the [REDACTED] I can't recall how old he was when he was at the school. I knew him very little but I never found him anything other than pleasant. I did see him with children and he always seemed to be pleasant around them. I never saw him discipline or abuse any of the children I witnessed him with nor have I heard of him abusing children.

QZL [REDACTED]

38. QZL [REDACTED] was an [REDACTED] teacher who was employed by the school. I don't recall the exact years he was at the school but I was at the school the whole time he was employed there. I can't recall how old he was when he was with the school. I knew him very little but I remember him being young, energetic and intelligent. He seemed to me to be friendly and bright. I did see him with children and he always seemed to be pleasant around them. I never saw him disciplining children. I never saw or heard of him being abusive towards the children.

FQY [REDACTED]

39. FQY [REDACTED] was a [REDACTED] teacher who was employed by the school. I don't recall when he was exactly at the school but his time coincided with my time at the school. I do not recall how old he was when he was employed by the school. I knew him very little but remember him being young, energetic and friendly. I did see him with children and he always seemed to be pleasant around them. I never saw him

disciplining any children. I never saw, or heard about, [FQY] abusing any children.

[RCQ]

40. [RCQ] was a [ ] teacher who was employed by the school. I don't recall when exactly she was at the school but her time coincided with my time at the school. I don't know how old she was when she was employed by the school. I knew her very little but I remember her being intelligent, caring and friendly. I did see her with children at the school and remember her being very caring around them. I never witnessed her disciplining or abusing any of the children. I do recall hearing, subsequent to her leaving the school, that she had had inappropriate relations with senior pupils. The facts surrounding that all emerged after she left the school.

[DRW]

41. [DRW] was a [ ] teacher who was employed by the school on two separate occasions. His second period of employment coincided with my time at the school. I do not know how old he was during the time he was at the school at the same time as me. I knew him reasonably well in a professional context. I remember him being friendly, caring and having an ironic sense of humour. Whenever I saw him around children he seemed caring and friendly. I never saw him abusing or disciplining any children. After he left the school I became aware of allegations of "skinny dipping" with pupils when he had been employed by the school much earlier in his career. I believe the alleged incidents occurred in the early 1990s.

[QZA]

42. [QZA] worked at the school at the same time as me. He was at the school at the same time as me from 1994 right up until his retirement. During his time at the school he was an [ ] teacher, a [ ] and latterly [SNR]. [SNR] I knew him reasonably well in a professional context. I recall him

being friendly but also a “no-nonsense traditionalist.” I did see him around children. I remember him being tough but never, in my experience, unfairly so. I never saw him disciplining or abusing any children. I never heard of him abusing any children.

### **Reporting of abuse at Merchiston Castle School**

43. My involvement in the areas of complaints and concerns was always in the academic sphere. My involvement only concerned matters such as concerns about academic programmes, academic progress, results and so on. When those complaints and concerns were raised they were always recorded.
44. There was a complaints or reporting process in place if any child in the school, or any person on their behalf, wished to make a complaint or report a concern. Everything was outlined in policy handbooks, which were shared with pupils, parents and members of staff. The processes surrounding that became more robust in light of advice and instructions given by external bodies following inspections. That was particularly so following the inspections undertaken between 2014 and 2017 subsequent to the concerns being raised surrounding the suicide of James Rainey Brown and the conduct of others.
45. Pupils knew where they could go if they required help. Pupils could go to any housemaster, tutor, member of staff or their parents if they wanted to speak about any worries they may have about the behaviour of other children, staff or others towards them. I am confident that if any child was being abused or ill-treated it would have come to light at or around the time it was occurring. I believe this because during my time at the school all pupils knew where they could go for help. In practice I am not aware of any children raising concerns because this has never been a direct part of my remit.

*Professional view of procedures and protocols surrounding reporting abuse and ill treatment at Merchiston*

46. As a professional, I was aware from the commencement of my employment of the procedures and protocols the school had in place for reporting any abuse or ill-treatment. In a nutshell that consisted of "if you see or become aware of something untoward, it is your professional and legal responsibility to report it." These definitions were always made clear by senior members of staff, were consistently reinforced in the context of GTCS professional standards and through updated policies. As time went on, definitions of abuse became more rigorous and government policy in this field became even more robust. I always made sure I was abreast of these developments and the school always provided in-service training and updates to keep staff members involved and informed.
47. The Care Commission probably came into the school in about 2014. I think they first came in following the suicide of James Rainy Brown. I think that it was because of that that they first came in. It became clear that external agencies had identified that the school's arrangements were not robust enough and an extended intervention took place to rectify this. The progress made by the school in this area was recently endorsed by these agencies. Accordingly, the definition of "abuse" developed over time, and quite rightly so.
48. From my perspective I was always very aware of what my responsibilities were. As a professional I took cognisance of GTCS standards and so on. Looking back, I would say that the processes and arrangements were always there within the school on paper. The managers always made it clear what you were meant to do in a particular situation. If I had ever had to use the processes and arrangements that were in place then I would have done. I only experienced one situation where I witnessed what I did concerning James Rainy Brown. Looking back, I did what I was expected to do in that particular situation.
49. Clearly when The Care Commission came in they took the view that the systems and structures that the school had in place needed to be more robust. They ended up



taking serious stringent steps to make sure that it was a case that they became more robust. In hindsight, I think that national policy moved on and Merchiston didn't perhaps keep pace with that. Quite rightly areas concerning child protection became higher in profile. Looking back, trying to be as unbiased as possible, things had moved on and the school had perhaps not moved fast enough. Ultimately, that was remedied following The Care Commission coming in.

### **Police investigations / criminal proceedings / civil claims and actions**


- 50. I have never provided a statement to the police or the Crown concerning alleged abuse of children cared for at the school. I have never given evidence at a trial concerning alleged abuse of children cared for at the school.
- 51. I have become aware of police investigations into alleged abuse at the school. I was made aware of their existence when I became a member of senior management at some juncture after January 2015. However, I was never involved in the detail because my leadership remit was purely in the academic sphere.
- 52. I have never been involved in the handling of reports to or civil claims made against the school by former pupils concerning historical abuse.

### **Closing thoughts**

- 53. In my experience pupils and staff at the school were always engaged and committed. The school provided a nurturing community where young people were encouraged to achieve their fullest potential whether that be in the academic, sporting or cultural sphere.
- 54. In my experience, there was always an enormous commitment to child protection and the wellbeing of pupils and members of staff, who work with a common purpose. It is my view that the school always had wellbeing and child protection policies,

procedures and structures in place. Where external agencies found that these should have been more robust, the school took decisive action to make sure that they were. Enormous progress was made in those areas. Those areas were endorsed recently by both Education Scotland and The Care Inspectorate. The lessons to be learned surely involve boarding schools ensuring that their policies and processes in this area are rigorously followed.

55. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..........

03 September 2020

Dated.....