

SINCLAIR HOUSE SCHOOL

Safeguarding Children – Children missing in education and missing children

This policy applies to both the Montessori Nursery and the Prep school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the School Office.

Document Details

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Review/Update Date	January (annually) - unless earlier review is required as per. DfE guidance update
Responsible Area	Safeguarding Team

This policy, which applies to the whole school, is publicly available on the school website and on request; a copy may be obtained from the school. All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours including activities away from school. This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with our Safeguarding – Child Protection, Behaviour Management, Whistleblowing Policies, the Staff Code of Conduct and the Lost and Missing Children Policy. This policy takes full account of the child protection procedures agreed by the Safeguarding Children Board and statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018)

Applies to all:

- the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the after/before school clubs, and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- all staff (teaching, support and office staff), Proprietor, Advisory Board and volunteers working in the school.

Monitoring and Review:

Monitoring and review: This policy is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by Sasha Gibson who is the Headmistress and Safeguarding Lead and Francesca Monti who is the Deputy DSL. The Headmistress will undertake a full annual review of this policy and procedures annually in January, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. This discussion will be formally documented in writing and shared with the Advisory Board at the end of Spring Term. The Headmistress recognises the expertise staff build by undertaking safeguarding training and managing safeguarding concerns. As such, staff have the opportunity to contribute to and shape our safeguarding arrangements and child protection policy. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay. All staff will be informed of the update/review and it is made available to them in either a hard copy or electronically.

Signed:

Date: 25th January 2020

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Mrs Carlotta T.M O'Sullivan (Principal and Proprietor)

Date of next review: January 2021

Our staff will follow the School's separate procedures for dealing with children who go missing, particularly on repeat occasions. They should act to identify any risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. Sinclair House will put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. Staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage. Missing education can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in [county lines](#) (Annex A, p83, p85). More information can be found in 'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care' and KCSIE (DfE: September, 2020).

Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children (MET)

Within Hammersmith and Fulham, the acronym MET is used to identify all children who are missing; believed to be at risk of or being sexually exploited; or who are at risk of or are being trafficked. Given the close links between all of these issues, there has been a considered response to join all three issues so that cross over of risk is not missed.

Children Missing from Education

For consultation and advice about a child/young person resident in Hammersmith and Fulham, contact Hammersmith and Fulham Duty Line (Front Door) on: 020 8753 6600/020 8748 8588 or Megan Brown (Safer Organisations (incorporates LADO) and Safeguarding in Education Manager) on: 020 8753 5125/07776 673 020 Email: megan.brown@lbhf.gov.uk or Anna Carpenter (Tr-Borough Head of Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance) on: 020 7361 3467/07971 320 88 Email: Anna.Carpenter@lbhs.gov.uk

The Hammersmith and Fulham Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) can be contacted as follows: LSBC Business Manager: Emma Biskupsi Telephone: 020 7361 300 (Kensington Town Hall) Email: emma.biskupsi@rbkc.gov.uk <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/sharedservices/lscb.aspx>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395138/Children_missing_education_Statutory_guidance_for_local_authorities.pdf

Patterns of children missing education can be an indicator of either abuse or safeguarding risks. A relatively short length of time a child is missing does not reduce risk of harm to that child, and all absence or non-attendance should be considered with other known factors or concerns.

DSL, DDSL and staff should consider:

Missing lessons:

- Are there patterns in the lessons that are being missed? Is this more than avoidance of a subject or a teacher?
- Does the child remain on the school site or are they absent from the site?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this time? Are they late because of a caring responsibility?
- Have they been directly or indirectly affected by substance misuse?
- Are other pupils routinely missing the same lessons, and does this raise other risks or concerns?
- Is the lesson being missed one that would cause bruising or injuries to become visible?

Single missing days:

- Is there a pattern in the day missed?
- Is it before or after the weekend suggesting the child is away from the area?
- Are there specific lessons or members of staff on these days?
- Is the parent informing the school of the absence on the day?
- Are missing days reported back to parents to confirm their awareness?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this day? Do the parents appear to be aware?
- Are the pupil's peers making comments or suggestions as to where the pupil is at?

Continuous missing days:

- Has the school been able to make contact with the parent? Is medical evidence being provided?

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- Are siblings attending school (either our or local schools)?
- Did we have any concerns about radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage, honor-based abuse, sexual exploitation?
- Have we had any concerns about physical or sexual abuse?

The school will view absence as both a safeguarding issue and an educational outcomes issue. The school may take steps that could result in legal action for attendance, or a referral to children's social care, or both.

Children Missing from Home or Care

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>

<http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-lobbying/children-risk/runaways>

Children who run away from home or from care, provide a clear behavioral indication that they are either unhappy or do not feel safe in the place that they are living.

Research shows that children run away from conflict or problems at home or school, neglect or abuse, or because children are being groomed by predatory individuals who seek to exploit them many run away on numerous occasions.

The association of chief police officers has provided the following definitions and guidance.

“Missing person is: ‘Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.’

An absent person is: ‘A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.’

All cases classified as ‘missing’ by the police will receive an active police response – such as deployment of police officers to locate a child. Cases where the child is classified as ‘absent’ will be recorded by the police and risk assessed regularly but no active response will be deployed. The absent case will be resolved when a young person returns or new information comes to light suggesting that he/she is at risk. In the latter instance, the case is upgraded to ‘missing’.

Within any case of children who are missing both push and pull factors will need to be considered. Push factors include:

- Conflict with parents/carers; Feeling powerless;
- Being bullied/abused; Being unhappy/not being listened to;
- The Toxic Trio (drink, drugs or substance abuse)

Pull factors include:

- Wanting to be with family/friends;
- Drugs, money and any exchangeable item; Peer pressure
- For those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker

As a school we will inform all parents of children who are absent (unless the parent has informed us). If the parent is also unaware of the location of their child, and the definition of missing is met, we will either support the parent to/directly contact the police to inform them.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

<http://paceuk.info/>

Sexual exploitation of children is not limited by the age of consent and can occur up until the age of 18. CSE involves children being in situations, contexts or relationships where they (or a third person) receive ‘something’ as a result of them performing sexual activities. The something can include food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, or money. Child sexual exploitation can happen via technology without the child's being aware; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.

In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. CSE can happen to a child of any age, gender, ability or social status. Often the victim of CSE is not aware that they are being exploited and do not see themselves as a victim.

Characteristics of Child Sexual Exploitation and abuse: it is often planned and systematic—people do not sexually abuse children by accident, through sexual abuse can be opportunistic; grooming the child—people who abuse children take care to

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choose a vulnerable child and often spend time making them dependent; grooming the child's environment—abusers try to ensure that potential adult protectors (parents and other carers especially) are not suspicious of their motives.

Indicators of sexual abuse: Some of the following signs may be behavioural indicators of sexual exploitation:

- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions; who associate with other young people involved in exploitation; have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant; who suffer from changes in emotional well-being; children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education; staying away from certain people or avoiding being alone with someone; displaying sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age;
- inappropriate masturbation or self-harm (including eating disorders) and an unwillingness to remove clothes when changing for PE etc.

Physical observations include damage to genitalia, anus or mouth; sexually transmitted diseases; unexpected pregnancy, especially in very young girls; soreness in genital area, anus or mouth and other medical problems such as chronic itching; unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain. The concerns listed are not exhaustive. Staff can and should also record and report other concerns about a child, such as general welfare concerns.

As a school we educate all staff in the signs and indicators of sexual exploitation. We use the sexual exploitation risk assessment form ([SERAF](#)) and [associated guidance](#) to identify pupils who are at risk and the DSL will share this information as appropriate with children's social care. We recognise that we may have information or intelligence that could be used to both protect children and prevent risk. Any relevant information that we have will be shared on the community partnership information (CPI) form.

Trafficked Children

http://4lscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_safeg_traff_ch.htm

Human trafficking is defined by the UNHCR in respect of children as a process that is a combination of:

- Movement (including within the UK);
- For the purpose of exploitation

Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim.

There is significant evidence that children (both of UK and other citizenship) are being trafficked internally within the UK and this is regarded as a more common form of trafficking in the UK. There are a number of indicators which suggest that a child may have been trafficked into the UK, and may still be controlled by the traffickers or receiving adults. These are as follows:

- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection or has an unwanted pregnancy;
- Has a history with missing links and unexplained moves;
- Is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day; Works in various locations;
- Has limited freedom of movement; Appears to be missing for periods;
- Is known to beg for money;
- Is being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents and the quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good;
- Is one among a number of unrelated children found at one address;
- Has not been registered with or attended a GP practice; Is excessively afraid of being deported.

For those children who are internally trafficked within the UK indicators include:

- Physical symptoms (bruising indicating either physical or sexual assault);
- Prevalence of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy;
- Reports from reliable sources suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation / the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation;
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse;
- Being in the community in clothing unusual for a child i.e. inappropriate for age, or borrowing clothing from older people
- Relationship with a significantly older partner;
- Accounts of social activities, expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding;

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- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite having not been at home;
- Having keys to premises other than those known about;
- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour including cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity;
- Truancy / disengagement with education;
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links; and/or
- Possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming on-line relationships, particularly with adults.

These behaviours themselves do not indicate that a child is being trafficked but should be considered as indicators that this may be the case. If staff believe that a child is being trafficked, this will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead for referral to be considered to children's social care.

We will follow-up unexplained absences of any children with a telephone call from the school on the morning of the first day of absence and notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a child who is on the children safeguarding register. The DSL shall also inform the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF) for any child who has been absent without the school's permission for such intervals as required by the LBHF. Where a child does not reside with LBHF, the DSL will notify the applicable local authority. Either LBHF or the applicable local authority (LA) will be informed if the child is to be deleted from the admission register. This would include such circumstances as being:

- taken out of school by his/her parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education; has ceased to attend Sinclair House and no longer lives within reasonable distance of Sinclair House;
- certified by a doctor as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend Sinclair House before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend Sinclair House after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and Sinclair House does not reasonably believe he/she will be returning at the end of the period or, has been permanently excluded.

The applicable local authority must be notified as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, but no later than the time of deleting the children's name from the register. This will assist the local authority to fulfil its duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing in education and follow up with any children who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Children being withdrawn from school: If a child is withdrawn from the school, all efforts will be made to identify the school to which the children is being admitted; their confidential educational and children protection records will be sent separately. If the parent/guardian/carer fails to provide information regarding the new school, an urgent referral will be made to Children's Services. Educational records sent to our school concerning a child who is not registered by the parent will be returned and the school advised to refer to their Local Authority Education Welfare Service. A child's name will only be removed from the School's Admission Register in accordance with the Child Registration Regulations. Further information is contained in our Admissions Policy.

Notifiable Incidents: This is an incident involving the care of a children that meets any of the following criteria:

- a child has died (including cases of suspected suicide) and abuse or neglect is known or suspected;
- a looked after children has died (including cases where abuse is **not** known or suspected);
- a child has been seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is known or suspected;
- a child in a regulated setting or service has died (including cases where abuse is **not** known or suspected).

Any such incident should be reported to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) coordinator whose contact details are Lavinia Armotrading:

Email: CLCTG.tri-bCDOP@nhs.net

Telephone: 02033504330

Also Ofsted and the DfE are to be informed along with the *Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences* (RIDDOR) in accordance with the regulations of 2013.

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