

**SINCLAIR HOUSE SCHOOL**  
**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS OF PUPILS**

This Procedure, (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is publicly available on the School website [www.sinclairhouseschool.co.uk](http://www.sinclairhouseschool.co.uk) and upon request a copy may be obtained from the School Office Email: [info@sinclairhouseschool.co.uk](mailto:info@sinclairhouseschool.co.uk)

**Legal Status:**

- This policy complies The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force.

**Applies to:**

- The parents of current pupils at Sinclair House School (Montessori Nursery and Prep school);
- The parents of past pupils of Sinclair House School if a complaint was raised when the pupil was still registered but does not cover exclusions.

**Timescale:** The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty-eight (28) working days except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors. However, if the complaint relates to the delivery of the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** at Sinclair House School, the school will ensure that all stages of the complaint will be completed within twenty-eight 28 calendar days whether inside or outside of term time.

**Monitoring and Review:** Action by the Headmistress for the Prep School and Principal (who is also the Proprietor) for the Nursery who:

- logs all complaints (formal and informal) received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. The logging of complaints for management purposes enables patterns of concern to be monitored.
- monitors the complaints procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this procedure. The Headmistress also retains details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.
- undertakes a formal annual review of these procedures for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than September of each school year or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:



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

Date reviewed: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

Review Date: September 2021

**Introduction:** Sinclair House School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to all of its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by Sinclair House School in accordance with this Procedure. This procedure encompasses the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is the aim of this procedure to resolve complaints either to the parent's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be swift (using the agreed time frame), fair and necessarily confidential. Throughout the process,

Sinclair House School will be willing to: listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise if appropriate, address any issues raised and change practices and procedures if appropriate

***A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response.***

We wish to ensure that:

- parents and pupils wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way and
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously, taking action where appropriate.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. We handle each complaint fairly, confidentially, using the agreed time frame. Throughout the process we listen, learn, admit mistakes, address issues raised, apologise and change practices and procedures, if appropriate. At all stages in the complaints process a written record is to be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this. The parents will then be informed in writing.

**The Complaints Process:** At all stages in the complaints process a written record is to be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this. The parents will then be informed in writing.

***“How should I complain?”***

**Stage 1 - Informal Resolution (Who should you contact?)** *(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Pupils should raise all complaints with their key worker (Nursery), class or specialist Teacher in the first instance. In the case of parents, any member of staff will be happy to help but it may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue. They will keep a dated record. You can also write a letter or telephone.

***“What will happen next?”*** If you raise something face to face or by telephone it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. If you have made a complaint in writing or via e-mail, we will respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed. In addition, a copy of your letter or your e-mail will be placed in the confidential Comments and Complaints file. This is to ensure we follow up any actions. In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given an indication of when you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible and usually within seven (7) school days. This will tell you the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it and any action taken or proposed.

***“What happens about confidentiality?”*** Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headmistress for the Prep or Principal for the Nursery and those directly involved, except in the circumstances required by law or school inspection. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children. We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police. You would be informed. While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued. However, serious complaints such as those raising allegations will be followed up. Action which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures, as a result of complaints, would be handled confidentially within the school.

***“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”*** We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered. Should the matter not be resolved to your satisfaction within seven (7) school days, then parents are to advance to the formal complaints stage of this procedure.

**Stage 2 – Formal Resolution** *(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)*

***What to do if you remain dissatisfied?***

If parents seek to invoke Stage 2 (following a failure to reach resolution at the 'Informal Resolution' stage), they should write or email in the first instance to the Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery). The Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery) will either meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within three (3) school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery) will establish what has happened so far and who has been involved; clarify

the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved and what the parents feel would resolve the issue. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery) to carry out further investigations. Written records will be kept by the Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery) of all meetings and interviews with regard to the complaint, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints, regardless of whether they're upheld. Once all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made by the Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery) and parents will be informed of this decision in writing or by email within fourteen (14) days.

### **Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke stage 3 (following a failure to reach an early resolution of this procedure) they will be referred to the Panel Convener who has been appointed by the Proprietor to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Panel Convener is The School Office Manager, Sinclair House School, 59 Fulham High Street, London, SW6 3JJ
- Parents will be asked to provide the specifics of the complaint in writing
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel within seven (7) days of receiving the complaint at Stage 3 for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three (3) people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The panel members are appointed by the Proprietor. The Proprietor will normally be a member of the panel. At least one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. The Department for Education has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member. *“Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, Principals or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”*
- The School Office Manager, on behalf of the Proprietor, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen (14) days of referral to the panel. The SOM will be present to take notes.
- If the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five (5) days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant(s) may be accompanied to the hearing. This may be a relative or friend.
- If possible, the Complaints Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within five (5) days of the Hearing.
- The Complaints Panel's findings, and, if any recommendations and the reasons for them will be sent by electronic mail or in writing to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about. These findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises and kept by the Proprietor and in the role of Principal of the Nursery and the Headmistress for at least three (3) years. The decision of the panel will be final.
- Sinclair House School will take the Complaints Panel findings seriously and will make appropriate changes to policies, procedures and practices as a result.

### **Summary of Time Scales**

#### **During School Time:**

- *Stage 1 Informal resolution:*  
Resolved in seven (7) days or progress to Stage 2
- *Stage 2 Formal resolution:* Response to parents within seven (7) days for meeting to resolve. If still unresolved or a further investigation needed, a letter from the Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery) will be received by the parents within twenty (20) days of the initial meeting.
- *Stage 3 Panel Hearing:*  
Complaint sent to the Complaints Panel within seven (7) days. The date of the hearing is to be set normally no later than fourteen (14) days. Copies of the particulars of the complaint are supplied to all parties not later than five (5) days prior to the hearing. If possible the parent's complaint will be resolved immediately. If further investigation is required, a decision will be sent within five (5) days of the hearing.

**During Holiday Periods** (*also refer to page 1 of this procedure regarding the EYFS*)

The complaint will normally be resolved within twenty-eight (28) days of the lodging of the complaint to its resolution whenever possible. Allowable exceptions to this rule are for instances when persons involved in the complaint are unavailable during holiday periods. In this case, the parents will be kept informed. However, as far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term, especially at the end of the Summer Term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and support reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the Panel as quickly as possible, especially if the parents will already have been engaged over a longer period in attempts to put things right.

**Record keeping for the Whole School:** A written record of all complaints of whether they are resolved at the informal stage or following a formal procedure, or proceeding to a panel hearing, is kept by the Headmistress (Prep) or Proprietor (Nursery) for a minimum of three years. We also keep a record of informal complaints. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld). A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Headmistress and Proprietor examine these written records on an annual basis. The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2020-2021) has been 0. The school will provide, on request to Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

**Child Protection:** For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Headmistress/DSL (Prep) or the Proprietor (Nursery). (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure).

Parents of Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are also entitled to make a complaint to Ofsted (The regulatory authority) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) (The inspecting authority) about the provision. The contact details for both organisations are:

- **Ofsted**, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.  
Telephone: 0301231231      Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)      Web: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- **Independent Schools Inspectorate**, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA,
- Telephone: 02076 000100 or to [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

If parents believe that Sinclair House School is not meeting the EYFS requirements they can also make a complaint to Achieving for Children at the London Borough of Richmond or Ofsted should they wish to; the relevant contact details are:

**Confidentiality:** The School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care. Parents and Guardians can be assured that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails