



# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## Introduction

Sunninghill Prep School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Sunninghill Prep School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and Sunninghill Prep School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published and of the form in which it is published. This procedure is not, however, available for use by prospective parents – it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Sunninghill Prep School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

## What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

During 2018-2019 the school received 2 complaints.

## Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

## Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

## Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Sunninghill prep School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge whether the complaint is upheld or not and if so, in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

## **The three-stage Complaint Procedure**

### **Stage 1 - Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Heads/the Head.
- Complaints made directly to a head of department/the Deputy Heads/the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher unless the head of department/the Deputy Heads/the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days in term time or as soon as practicable in the school holidays or in the event that the

Form teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

### **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 days in term time or as soon as practicable in the school holidays of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also interview members of staff to ascertain the facts, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further within 14 days in term time or as soon as practicable in the school holidays. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 - Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) the request must be made within 10 school days of receipt of the decision made in Stage 2, to the Clerk to the Governors.
- The Clerk to the Governors will record the date the request is received and acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
- Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- The Clerk to the Governors will convene a hearing of the Complaints Panel.

- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 28 days.
- If the 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 normally not later than 3 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend but this allowance does not entitle parents to insist on legal representation.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head.

#### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within seven working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure working days refers to weekdays (Mondays to Fridays) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

#### Recording Complaints

Sunninghill Prep School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, whether upheld or not and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Written complaints will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome with 28 days. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the requirements.

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).]
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)]

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints made under the formal part of this policy, whether upheld or not and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 33(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Sunninghill Prep School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, whether upheld or not and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Written complaints about the EYFS provision will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome with 28 days. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).]
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)]

### References:

The Education (Independent school Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISS Regulations)  
ISI handbook: Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements Jan 2017  
[DfE Model complaints procedure](#)

## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Mr John Thorpe (Headmaster) or Mrs Eileen Akerman (Bursar & Clerk to the Governors) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**  
**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**