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Lancot Academy

Complaints Policy

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Statement of intent

Lancot Academy aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

The Complaints Procedures Policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff or the academy as a whole, relating to any aspects of the academy or the provision of facilities or services.

Any person, including a member of the public, is able to make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that Lancot Academy provides. This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and academy must follow.

Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

At Lancot Academy, the class teacher will be the first point of contact when following the complaints procedure.

Signed by:

Headteacher

Date:

Chair of Governors

Date:

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 2002.
- The Data Protection Act 1998.
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- The Immigration Act 2016.
- The Equality Act 2010.

This policy also has due regard to guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE 'Best Practice Advice for Academy Complaints Procedures 2016' 2016.
- HM Government 'Code of practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers' 2016.

Definition

For the purpose of this policy, a "complaint" can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' which can be regarding actions taken or a perceived lack of action.

Complaints can be resolved formally or informally dependent on the complainant's choice.

A concern can be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt' for which reassurance is sought.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures shall be taken.

NB. For the purpose of this policy, "concerns" will be classed and addressed as complaints. Any further references to "complaints" will include "concerns".

Roles and responsibilities

The complainant will:

- Have a discussion with your child's teacher. It will be necessary for the parent/carer to make an appointment at a time which is convenient to both parties. The parent/carer will need to let the member of staff know the nature of their concern when making the appointment so that they can make necessary investigations prior to the meeting.
- The purpose of the meeting should be to establish a solution or to agree a plan of action to resolve the concern that has been raised.
- If the meeting fails to do this then the parent/carer should make an appointment to see a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- If you are still dissatisfied, you may wish to make a written complaint to a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- If required, following this meeting, the Headteacher will then be consulted to make further investigations before meeting with the parent/carer to suggest a workable solution.

- If the parent/carer continues to feel the matter is not satisfactorily resolved then they may request a further meeting with the Headteacher or consider making the matter the subject of a formal complaint.
- It is important that these procedures are followed by all parents/carers and that they seek resolution to a concern or complaint. A failure to follow procedure may result in the procedure being terminated by the Governing Body later on.

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Ensure that all parties involved in the complaint are fully updated throughout each stage of the procedure.
- Guarantee that all parties involved in the procedure are aware of any relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Keep up-to-date records throughout the procedure.
- Liaise with all parties involved to ensure the complaints procedure runs smoothly, including the Headteacher, clerk and chair of governors.
- Be aware of issues in regards to sharing third party information.
- Understand the complainant's need for additional support, including interpretation support, and will be aware of any issues concerning this.

The Head of the Governing Body will:

- Continuously liaise with the Senior Leadership Team.
- Keep up-to-date records of all proceedings throughout the procedure.
- Set the date, time and venue of all hearings, ensuring that this is appropriate, convenient and accessible to all parties involved.
- Collate all written material or evidence involved and send it to the parties involved in timely advance of the hearing.
- Greet all parties as they arrive at the hearing.
- Ensure that the minutes of the panel hearing are circulated.
- Notify the relevant parties of the panel's decision and any other actions to be taken.

Making a complaint

Lancot Academy will ensure that all aspects of the complaints procedure are:

- Easily accessible and publicised.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure to inform the academy's senior management team.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues in order to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises in order to amend the issue in an appropriate timescale.

Lancot Academy upholds a three-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged regarding an incident.

Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

Complaints should be made using the appropriate channels of communication.

All complaints shall be considered whether made in person, by telephone, in writing or electronically via email.

A complaint can progress to the next stage of the procedure even if it is not viewed as “justified”. All complainants are given the opportunity to fully complete the complaints procedure.

Any complaint made against the Headteacher shall be initially dealt with by the Chair of Governors.

Any complaint made against the Chair of Governors or any other member of the Governing Body should be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body.

Complaints procedure

Stage one – Complaint made to a member of staff.

- The member of staff can discuss the complaint with the Senior Leadership Team or the Headteacher in order to seek support.
- Receipt of complaint will be acknowledged and a response will be sent within 5 working days.
- If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed and will need to handle the complaint. The complainant can then be referred to the chair of the governing body.
- In case a complaint is made initially to a Governor, the complainant should be referred to the appropriate person. The Governor in question should not act alone on a complaint outside the procedure; if they do, they cannot be involved if the complaint is subject to a hearing at a later stage of the procedure.
- The complainant and the relevant member of staff should discuss the issue in a respectful and informal manner to seek a mutual resolution (normally within 10 academy days).

Stage two – Complaint made to the Headteacher.

- If a concern is not resolved at the informal stage above, it must be put in writing by the parent/carer and passed to the Headteacher, who will investigate the matter or delegate responsibility to a senior colleague.

- The written complaint should include details which might assist the investigation such as names of potential witnesses, dates and time of events and copies of relevant documents.
- Stage two of the process will be completed within 15 academy days.
- Where the situation is recognised as complex, and it is deemed to be unable to be resolved within this timescale, the Headteacher will contact the complainant to inform them of the revised target date via a written notification.
- An appointment with the Headteacher should be made, as soon as reasonably practical in order to avoid any possible worsening of the situation.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complainant will initially need to write, in confidence, to the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair will seek to resolve the issue informally before moving directly to stage three of the procedure.
- In terms of a complaint being made against a member of staff, the Headteacher will discuss the issue with the staff member in question. Where necessary, the Headteacher will conduct interviews with any relevant parties, including witnesses and children, and take statements from those involved.
- All discussions shall be recorded by the Headteacher and findings and resolutions will be communicated to the complainant either verbally or in writing.
- Once all facts are established, the Headteacher shall contact the complainant in writing with an explanation of the decision.
- However, if the outcome of the investigation results in the implementation of staff disciplinary procedures, such procedures will remain strictly confidential.
- Any further action Lancot Academy plans to take to resolve the issue will be explained to the complainant in writing.

Stage three – Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP).

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed or if the complaint is about the Headteacher then a full written complaint should be sent to the Chair of Governors at the school's address within 10 academy days.
- The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant to confirm receipt of the letter and will investigate the matter fully and reply to the complainant within a further five working days. This will inform the complainant that a CAP will hear the complaint within 20 academy days.
- The Chair of Governors, or other nominated governor, will convene a Governing Body CAP comprising three members of the Governing Body.
- The Chair of Governors will collect any evidence deemed necessary to ensure an effective investigation and may interview other witnesses.
- Prior to the hearing, the Chair of Governors will have written to the complainant informing them of how the review will be conducted. The Headteacher will also have a copy of this letter.
- The Headteacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint, any additional evidence presented by the complainant and any information collected by the Chair of Governors.
- Once there has been an opportunity for the Headteacher to consider this information he/she will meet separately with the Chair of Governors to present a response. On

at the conclusion of this meeting, the complainant and the Headteacher will be informed, in writing, of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which may ensue.

- If the complainant believes there is likely to be bias in the proceedings, they reserve the right to request an independent panel.
- Lancot Academy will consider the request but ultimately the decision is made by the Governing Body.
- Five days' notice will be given to all parties attending the CAP, including the complainant.
- At the hearing, all participants will be given the opportunity to put their case across and discuss any issues.
- The CAP will consider issues raised in the original complaint and any issues which have been highlighted during the complaints procedure.

The meeting should allow for:

- The complainant to explain their complaint and the Headteacher to explain the reasons for their decision.
- The complainant to question the Headteacher, and vice versa, about the complaint.
- Any evidence, including witnesses who have been prior approved by the chair of the CAP, to be questioned.
- Members of the CAP to question both the complainant and the Headteacher.
- Final statements to be made by both parties involved.

The complainant will receive a written response explaining the final outcome within 15 academy days. This letter will also explain whether there are any further rights of appeal and to whom they need to be addressed.

The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might follow. However, if the investigation does result in a change to the school's policies, then the complainant will be informed of this in detail. This will bring the Governing Body to a close and further correspondence will not, and cannot, be entered into.

If an appropriate resolution cannot be sought at this level, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome following the initial discussions, the complainant may wish to proceed to the next level of the procedure – making contact with the DfE.

Interviewing witnesses

When interviewing children in order to gather information regarding a complaint, the interview should be conducted in the presence of another member of staff or, in the case of serious complaints, e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists, in the presence of their parents/carers. Lancot Academy will ensure that the conduction of interviews does not prejudice an LA designated officer's (LADO), or police, investigation.

The academy understands the importance of ensuring a friendly and relaxed area which is free from intimidation. All children interviewed will be made fully aware of what the interview concerns and their right to have someone with them.

Staff are allowed a colleague to support them at their interview. The colleague must not be anyone likely to be interviewed themselves, including their line manager.

The interviewer will not express opinions in words or attitude, so as to not influence the interviewee.

The observing party (staff or parent) will sign a copy of the transcription of the interview.

Recording a complaint

A record shall be kept of any complaint made, whether via phone, in person or in writing, detailing the main issues raised, ready to discuss at a later date. Lancot Academy holds the right to use recording devices, where appropriate, to ensure all parties involved are able to review the discussions at a later date.

Where there are communication difficulties or disabilities, the academy may provide recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point

Details of any complaint made shall not be shared with the entire Governing Body unless completely necessary, in case an independent panel is needed to hear the complaint. The progress and the final outcome of a complaint will be recorded and kept up-to-date by the Headteacher.

Lancot Academy will hold all records of complaints centrally. Complainants have a right to access copies of these records under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

Complaints not covered by this procedure

Complaints regarding the following topics should be directed to the LA:

- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- Academy reorganisation proposals.
- Matters which may require a Child Protection Investigation.
- Admissions to academies.
- Complaints concerning admissions will be directed to the appropriate admissions authority.
- Complaints about children being excluded from the academy should be dealt with by following the process explained at: <https://www.gov.uk/academy-discipline-exclusions/exclusions>.

Lancot Academy has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all employees and voluntary staff. Complaints of this nature should not be addressed using this complaints procedure. These concerns can be directed to Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155 or via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk.

Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures will be dealt with using Lancot Academy's internal grievance procedure. In these cases, complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigations.

This complaints procedure is not to be used when addressing any complaints made about services provided by a third party who may use the academy premises or facilities. All complaints concerning this should be directed to the service provider.

Exceptional circumstances

If the complaint suggests that a child has been at risk of significant harm through violence, emotional abuse, sexual harassment or neglect, it may be referred without further notice to the children's social care and/or to the LADO.

If a social services authority decides to investigate a situation, the Headteacher or Governing Body may postpone the complaints procedure.

Where a matter can be resolved through a legal appeal, it will not be considered as a formal complaint. The key areas are: admissions decisions, certain decisions relating to formal assessment of special educational needs, and decisions to permanently exclude a child.

Serial and persistent complainants

The academy will act in a manner they believe to be appropriate when dealing with an individual who consistently makes the same complaints or who continuously asks the academy to reconsider their position.

If a complainant attempts to re-open an issue which has previously fully completed the complaints procedure, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform the complainant that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts the academy regarding the same issue again, the complaint may be classed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the academy does not have an obligation to respond.

The academy must ensure that a complaint is not classed as 'serial' before they have fully completed the complaints procedure.

Lancot Academy will not take the decision to stop responding to an individual lightly. The academy will ensure that:

- They have previously taken every reasonable step to address the problem.
- They have provided the complainant with a statement of their position.
- The complainant is contacting the academy repeatedly with the same complaint.

If the academy believes that the complainant is continuously contacting the academy to cause disruption or inconvenience, or if the complainant is being abusive or threatening, the academy has the right to not respond to the correspondent.

Once Lancot Academy decides to no longer respond to a complainant, the individual will be informed of this decision in writing.

If the academy finds it difficult to deal with a complainant due to their unreasonable behaviour, then their complaint can be directed to the LA.

The complainant has the right to a third party representative, such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau, throughout the complaints procedure.

Any new complaint made by a 'serial' complainant will be responded to.

Complainants hold the right to refer their complaint to their local MP. This would not make the individual a 'serial' or 'persistent' complainant.

Lancot Academy will not deny any individual access to information that they have a right to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005.

Barring from the premises

Academy premises are private property and therefore any individual can be barred from entering the premises.

If a parent's/carer's behaviour is cause for concern, an academy can ask the individual to leave the premises.

The Headteacher or the TRUST will notify the parties involved via writing, explaining that their implied licence for access to the premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make.

The individual involved will be given the opportunity to formally express their views regarding the decision to bar them.

This decision to bar will be reviewed, taking into account any discussions following the incident.

If the decision is made to continue the bar, the individual will be contacted in writing, informing them of how long the bar will be in place. Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including email, to the Headteacher or chair of governors. Once the academy's complaints procedure is completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts.

If the decision is made to continue the bar, the individual will be contacted in writing, informing them of how long the bar will be in place. Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including email, to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. Once the academy's complaints procedure is completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts.

Standard of fluency complaints

If the decision is made to continue the bar, the individual will be contacted in writing, informing them of how long the bar will be in place. Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including email, to the Headteacher or chair of governors. Once the academy's complaints procedure is completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts. As members of a public authority, all staff are subject to the fluency duty imposed by the Immigration Act 2016, which requires staff members to have an appropriate level of fluency in English in order to teach pupils.

The academy is free to determine the level of spoken communication necessary in order for staff members to develop effective performance, but it will be matched to the demands of the role in question.

The academy will be satisfied that an individual has the necessary level of fluency appropriate for the role they will be undertaking, whether this is an existing or potential new member of staff.

If a member of the academy community feels that a staff member has insufficient proficiency in spoken English for the performance of their role, they are required to follow the complaints procedure outlined in [section 5](#) of this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, a “**legitimate complaint**” is one which is about the standard of spoken English of a member of staff; complaints regarding an individual’s accent, dialect, manner or tone of communication are not considered legitimate complaints.

All legitimate complaints regarding the fluency duty will be handled in line with the processes outlined in this policy.

In addition to the processes outlined in this policy, the academy will assess the merits of a legitimate complaint against the necessary standard of spoken English fluency required for the role in question.

To assess the merits, the academy will undertake an objective assessment against clear criteria set out in the role specification or, against the level of fluency descriptors relevant to the role in question.

If the complaint is upheld, the academy will consider what action is necessary to meet the fluency duty; this may include:

- Specific training.
- Specific retraining.
- Assessment.
- Redeployment.
- Dismissal.

Appropriate support will be provided to staff to ensure that they are protected from vexatious complaints and are not subjected to unnecessary fluency testing.

Records of complaints regarding fluency will be kept in accordance with the processes outlined in [section 7](#) of this policy.

Role of the academy complaints unit (SCU)

If a complainant remains dissatisfied once the complaint procedure has been completed, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State will only intervene when they believe that the Governing Body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

The SCU will not overturn an academy’s decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances, such as the academy acting unlawfully.

When making a final decision about a complaint, the academy reserves the right to seek advice from the SCU on whether they are acting reasonably and lawfully; however, they will not be able to advise on how to resolve the complaint.

Reviewing the procedure

The complaints procedure will be reviewed every year, taking into account the latest guidance issued by the DfE.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure belongs to a committee of the Governing Body, an individual governor or the Headteacher. All projected review dates will be adhered to.

Information gathered through reviewing the complaints procedure will be used to continuously improve and develop the process.

The monitoring and reviewing of complaints will be used to help evaluate the academy's performance.

Unreasonable Complainants Policy

Lancot Academy is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the academy; however, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Lancot Academy defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the academy, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the academy's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on academy time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously.

- Aggressively.
- Using threats, intimidation or violence.
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language.
- Knowing it to be false.
- Using falsified information.
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media, websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with an academy while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Lancot Academy causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Lancot Academy premises.

Complaints Procedure Form

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher. (If your complaint is against the Headteacher, you will need to send the form to the Chair of the Governing Body.)

Name:	Address:
Pupil's name:	
Pupil's date of birth:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Email:	Postcode:
What is your complaint concerning, and what action would you like the Headteacher to take?	
When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?	
What was the result of the discussion?	
Signed:	Date:

Example Letter to Complainant for a Stage Two Complaint

An example of a letter that the chair of the Governing Body may send to the complainant, upon receipt of a complaint at stage two.

Dear **addressee's name**,

Thank you for your letter dated **date** setting out the reasons why you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's response to your complaint about **details of the complaint**.

I am writing to let you know that I will be arranging for a complaints appeal panel (CAP) to consider your complaint, in accordance with our academy's complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the **Chair** of the CAP will advise, in writing, how the CAP intends to consider your complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the Governing Body

Example Letter for Complaints Against the Headteacher

Dear **addressee's name**,

I have received your complaint against the Headteacher of **Lancot Challenger Academy**.

I write to let you know that I have forwarded a copy of your complaint to the Headteacher, with a request that they respond to the issues raised in the complaint within 10 academy days.

A copy of the Headteacher's response will be sent to you as soon as possible.

If you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's response, I will arrange for a complaints appeal panel (CAP) to consider your complaint in accordance with stage two of the attached complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the Chair of the CAP will advise you, in writing, how the complaint will proceed.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the Governing Body