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1. Statement of intent

The aim of this policy is to ensure concerns and complaints are properly heard, handled fairly, and resolved at the earliest opportunity.

Lokrum Fields is committed to taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage and we anticipate that the formal complaints procedures will rarely be used. The availability of formal procedures will not undermine our efforts to resolve concerns informally.

In most cases the class teacher will receive the first expression of concern. Staff are encouraged to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Formal procedures will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern wishes to take the matter further.

The Headteacher is responsible for the operation and management of the complaints procedure.

2. About our policies

- 2.1. Our policies have been developed to comply with all relevant legislation and associated guidance. Policies will be updated periodically as necessary.
- 2.2. Our policies are inter-related and are intended to be read, understood, and used collectively.
- 2.3. All staff and governors are expected to be familiar with and abide by our policies.

- 2.4. The Office Manager is responsible for ensuring volunteers and visitors are familiar with any policies which are relevant to their involvement and for taking reasonable steps to ensure compliance.
- 2.5. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring policies are implemented fairly, effectively, and consistently.
- 2.6. The Headteacher is responsible for identifying any training needs in relation to our policies. The Office Manager is responsible for arranging the required training. All staff are expected to engage in continuous learning and ongoing training appropriate to their roles.
- 2.7. The effectiveness of our policies and their implementation is monitored by the Governing Body. Unless otherwise stated, the Governing Body reviews each policy annually.
- 2.8. The Governing Body for Lokrum Fields is provided by Governing for Ambition, an independent community interest company. The Governing Body uses its expertise to monitor the performance of Lokrum Fields and to advise the Proprietor of any recommended actions. Responsibilities assigned to the Governing Body are limited to these advisory and accountability functions.
- 2.9. Lokrum Fields is owned by Wider Ambition Ltd, a subsidiary of Wider Plan Ltd. References to the Proprietor mean a Director of Lokrum Fields or a senior representative from Wider Plan with delegated authority.
- 2.10. The Lokrum Fields Senior Leadership Team (SLT) includes the Headteacher, Proprietor, and any member of staff to whom responsibility is temporarily delegated by the Headteacher or Proprietor.
- 2.11. All references to parents within our policies should be interpreted to include parent carers.

3. Underlying principles

- 3.1. Our complaints procedure is intended to be easily accessible and easy to use.
- 3.2. We encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- 3.3. We take an impartial and non-adversarial approach to complaints.
- 3.4. Our support for students and their families will not be adversely affected by the submission of a complaint.
- 3.5. Complaints are treated with appropriate confidentiality.
- 3.6. We aim to resolve complaints swiftly and keep all parties informed of timescales and progress.

- 3.7. We involve independent parties where applicable, and we welcome constructive feedback.
- 3.8. We aim to learn from our mistakes and to ensure that the wellbeing of students is always prioritised.
- 3.9. Complaints in relation to prospective students or in relation to students who left Lokrum Fields prior to the complaint being raised are not covered by statutory complaints requirements. However, we will address any such complaints through the same procedures unless we have reason to believe that doing so would be inappropriate.
- 3.10. Complaints raised by students are not covered by statutory complaints procedures. However, we teach students the skills of self-advocacy and therefore will accept complaints from students in the same way as if the complaint had been made by a parent, unless we have reason to believe that doing so would be detrimental to the student's wellbeing. We will inform the student's parents of the complaint unless the student is aged 13 or over, is competent to make their own decisions in relation to data protection and asks us not to do so. Decisions to respect a student's right to confidentiality will always explicitly consider any welfare or safeguarding risks and ensure appropriate action is taken.

4. Investigating complaints

- 4.1. The person investigating the complaint, usually the Headteacher, makes sure that they:
 - 4.1.1. Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved.
 - 4.1.2. Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
 - 4.1.3. Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required.
 - 4.1.4. Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
 - 4.1.5. Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
 - 4.1.6. Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
 - 4.1.7. Keep notes of any interviews and investigations.

5. Resolving complaints

- 5.1. At each stage in the procedure, we will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. Lokrum Fields may acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:
 - 5.1.1. An apology.

- 5.1.2. An explanation.
- 5.1.3. An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- 5.1.4. An assurance that the event complained of will not recur.
- 5.1.5. An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- 5.1.6. An undertaking to review relevant policies.
- 5.2. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.
- 5.3. Our procedure seeks to identify areas of agreement between the parties, to clarify any misunderstandings and to resolve any outstanding issues.

6. Vexatious complaints

- 6.1. There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant seeks to reopen the same issue without significant fresh information being available, we may inform them that the procedure has been completed and that we therefore consider the matter to be closed.

7. Time limits

- 7.1. Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- 7.2. We aim to set prompt and realistic time limits for each stage of the complaints procedure. Where delays arise, we will inform the complainant of the new timescales and provide an explanation for the delay.
- 7.3. We aim to resolve any informal concerns within one week.
- 7.4. Where concerns remain unresolved and are escalated to the Headteacher, we aim to complete any necessary meetings and investigations within two weeks.
- 7.5. Where complaints are escalated to the Governors, we aim to arrange a panel hearing within two weeks and provide a final response within five working days of the hearing.

8. The formal complaints process

- 8.1. There are defined stages to our complaints process. At each stage we aim to be clear about who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. We will allow for appropriate flexibility, for example facilitating additional meetings or completing further investigations, where we consider this will aid resolution.
- 8.2. There are three school-based stages:

- 8.2.1. Stage one: complaint heard by a staff member
 - 8.2.2. Stage two: complaint heard by the Headteacher
 - 8.2.3. Stage three: complaint heard by the complaints appeal panel of the Governing Body.
- 8.3. Complaints in relation to the conduct of the Headteacher should be submitted to Wider Ambition HR at 11-16 Chestnut Court, Jill Lane, Sambourne, B96 5EW. Wider Ambition HR will then liaise with the Chair of Governors as appropriate.
- 8.4. Complaints in relation to the conduct of a Governor should be submitted to the Headteacher in the first instance. The Headteacher will then liaise with the Chair of Governors and the Proprietor as appropriate.
- 8.5. Any complaints received directly by the Proprietor will be passed to the appropriate stage of this complaints process to ensure a consistent approach is taken to resolution.
- 8.6. If complaints remain unresolved at the end of this process, the complainant may escalate their complaint to the Department for Education.

9. Recording and monitoring complaints

- 9.1. Lokrum Fields will record all complaints which are not resolved informally by a member of staff.
- 9.2. The record of complaints will include whether they are resolved through formal procedures or escalated to a panel hearing, and the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).
- 9.3. Complaints may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. We will take reasonable steps to ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of the key points of any discussion and any agreement. Appropriate notes will be kept of meetings and other communication.
- 9.4. The Headteacher will be responsible for maintaining the records and ensuring they are treated with appropriate confidentiality.
- 9.5. The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will ordinarily be anonymised.
- 9.6. The process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. We aim to identify and address any underlying issues rather than simply resolving the complaint. Complaints will be actively monitored and reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body for this purpose.

Appendix 1

How to make a complaint – Guidance for Parents

First, tell us of your concern. This could be by telephone, email, a visit, or a letter. A friend or advocate can speak on your behalf if you prefer.

Unless you feel it would be inappropriate to do so, please make your concern known to your child's class teacher in the first instance. They will either deal with the issue or pass it on to someone who is able to help. Please remember that it may not be possible to see a teacher immediately and sometimes an appointment will have to be made, although we would expect teachers to be able to offer an appointment without delay.

If you are not satisfied that your concern has been addressed effectively, please ask for your concern to be passed to the Headteacher. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact the Headteacher directly.

If, after the matter has been investigated by the Headteacher, you are not satisfied with our response, you can make a formal complaint to the Governing Body, either by completing the Lokrum Fields Complaints Form (Appendix 3) or otherwise in writing. We will also ask you to indicate how you would like to see the matter resolved.

You will be invited to a meeting to discuss your complaint. You may be accompanied by a friend or representative and bring a witness if appropriate.

The Governing Body panel will then consider your complaint and respond within 5 days of the meeting.

Appendix 2: Lokrum Fields Complaints Procedure

1. Complaint heard by a member of staff

- 1.1. All staff are expected to be familiar with our complaints procedure and to aim to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage.
- 1.2. If a complainant feels uncomfortable discussing their concern with a particular member of staff, we will endeavour to ensure they can express their concern to a different member of staff.
- 1.3. If the complaint is about a member of staff and they feel too compromised to address it, they may ask the Headteacher to refer the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

2. Complaint heard by the Headteacher

- 2.1. The Headteacher's influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school. At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one as well as pursuing their initial complaint.
- 2.2. The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.
- 2.3. Any complaints which are escalated to the Headteacher will also be notified by the Headteacher to the Proprietor.

3. Complaint heard by the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel and reviewed by the Proprietor

- 3.1. When a complaint is escalated to the Governing Body, the Chair of Governors will be responsible for coordinating the response.
- 3.2. If the complaint is in relation to any member of staff, the complaint will be forwarded to Wider Ambition HR and notified to the Proprietor. The Chair of Governors will follow any directions provided by Wider Ambition HR to ensure that any disciplinary proceedings which may be necessary will not be compromised.
- 3.3. Complaints will typically be heard by a panel made up of at least three members of the Governing Body and one additional independent person who is not involved in the management or running of the school. A representative of the Proprietor may also attend the meeting as a panel member or observer, at the Proprietor's discretion.
- 3.4. The panel may elect its own Chair for the proceedings. The role of the Chair is to:
 - 3.4.1. Outline the remit of the panel is to all parties and ensure that each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption.

- 3.4.2. Ensure that all the issues are addressed.
- 3.4.3. Ensure that all key findings of the facts are made.
- 3.4.4. Ensure that parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease.
- 3.4.5. Ensure the hearing is conducted in a formal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy.
- 3.4.6. Ensure the panel is open minded and acting independently.
- 3.4.7. Ensure no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- 3.4.8. Ensure that all parties are given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions.
- 3.4.9. Ensure all written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.
- 3.4.10. Ensure that each member of the panel provides the Chair with written notes of their views prior to a discussion of findings, in order to avoid confirmation bias.
- 3.5. The panel can recommend that Wider Ambition:
 - 3.5.1. Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
 - 3.5.2. Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
 - 3.5.3. Take specified actions to resolve the complaint.
 - 3.5.4. Changes the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- 3.6. It is important that the panel hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No Governor may sit on the panel if they have had significant prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- 3.7. The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between Lokrum Fields and the complainant. The hearing should seek to establish the facts and satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.
- 3.8. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care will be taken to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial. Reasonable measures will be taken to arrange the hearing at a time which is mutually convenient.

- 3.9. If the complainant chooses not to attend the panel hearing, the hearing will nevertheless go ahead.
- 3.10. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a student. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the student does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the student and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the student's parent is the complainant, we invite them to comment on which parts of the hearing, if any, the student needs to attend.
- 3.11. The Governors sitting on the panel must be familiar with school policies, including this complaints procedure.
- 3.12. The Chair of the panel will send a report to the Proprietor advising of the panel's findings, recommendations and reasons.
- 3.13. The Governing Body of Lokrum Fields is non-executive; however, recommendations made by the Governing Body Appeals Panel will be held with due regard by the Proprietor.
- 3.14. The Proprietor will notify the parties of Wider Ambition's final decision.
- 3.15. A copy of the panel's report will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person about whom the complaint is made. A copy will also be available for further inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and Headteacher.

4. Checklist for a Panel Hearing

- 4.1. The hearing is as informal as possible.
- 4.2. Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- 4.3. After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- 4.4. The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- 4.5. The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- 4.6. The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- 4.7. The panel may ask questions at any point.
- 4.8. The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.

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- 4.9. The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- 4.10. Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- 4.11. The chair explains that both parties will hear from Wider Ambition within a set time scale.

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Appendix 3: Lokrum Fields Complaint Form

Lokrum Fields Complaint Form
Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.
Your name: Student's name: Your relationship to the student: Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: E-mail address: Please give details of your complaint. What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint?
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 whom: Complaint referred to: Date: