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Distribution: All staff and stakeholders

Owner: Senior Leadership Team

Policy Lead: Head of Education

1. Introduction

Labyrinth Education is committed to fostering an open, safe, and supportive culture that prioritises the wellbeing, education, and care of the people we serve. We are a values-led organisation rooted in integrity, compassion, and accountability.

We believe every voice matters. Our community of staff, learners, and stakeholders must feel safe to raise concerns about practices that may affect the quality of education, care, or wellbeing across our settings.

This policy outlines how anyone within Labyrinth Education can raise concerns (whistleblow) without fear of victimisation or disadvantage, in line with our “Freedom to Speak Up” approach. This framework supports openness, early intervention, and continuous learning—key tenets of our culture.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Current and former employees
- Contractors and agency workers
- Volunteers

Concerns related to our service provision, conduct, or practice can be raised under this policy, provided they meet the definition of a protected disclosure.

3. What Is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when a team member shares a concern about practice, a person’s actions and/or conduct/professionalism or risks they’ve observed within the organisation. This may relate to:

- Criminal activity (e.g. fraud, abuse)
- Breaches of legal obligations
- Endangering health and safety

- Environmental harm
- Miscarriages of justice
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above
- A culture of systemic bullying, harassment or victimisation (when in the public interest)

Personal grievances (e.g. individual bullying or discrimination claims) are typically not covered unless they impact public interest; these are managed through grievance procedures.

Labyrinth Education adheres to whistleblowing protections set out in the **Employment Rights Act 1996** and **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**.

4. Purpose of This Policy

This policy aims to:

- Encourage openness, curiosity, and courage when raising concerns
 - Provide a clear pathway for raising issues and receiving timely feedback
 - Ensure those who speak up are protected and respected
 - Reinforce our commitment to improvement and integrity
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5. Freedom to Speak Up

Freedom to Speak Up empowers our colleagues to raise any issue that may impact people, practice, or professional integrity. We acknowledge that some individuals—due to background, identity, or position—may feel less confident to speak up. This policy is for *everyone*, including:

- Full-time and part-time colleagues
- Agency staff
- Volunteers and former employees
- Those from diverse backgrounds including LGBTQ+ colleagues, those with disabilities, or from ethnic minority communities

Speaking up might involve anything that feels “not quite right”—from overlooked processes to discriminatory behaviours. We promise to listen to all concerns raised and act accordingly and appropriately.

6. Responsibilities

All colleagues are encouraged and empowered to raise concerns using the appropriate steps.

Leaders must:

- Promote a culture of psychological safety

- Respond promptly and respectfully to concerns
- Escalate serious incidents using our internal procedures
- Ensure clear, visible access to Freedom to Speak Up guidance

The Senior Leadership team are responsible for:

- Overseeing whistleblowing procedures and governance
 - Reporting serious matters to leadership and external regulators as needed
 - Analysing patterns to drive strategic improvements
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7. Safeguards

Labyrinth Education upholds a zero-tolerance stance on retaliation. Any form of bullying, harassment, or disadvantage toward someone who raises a concern in good faith will result in appropriate action. We will support all individuals through the process with discretion and care.

8. Confidentiality

Concerns raised are treated confidentially. Identities will only be disclosed with consent, or if required by law or in disciplinary proceedings. In such cases, individuals will be informed and supported throughout.

9. How to Raise a Concern

Start by speaking with your line manager, Head of Service, or Headteacher. If this is not appropriate:

- Contact a senior leader (Head of Governors, Executive Team or Freedom to Speak Up Guardian)
- Or email: info@labyrinth-ed.co.uk with the title **Concern**.

All concerns will be acknowledged within **one working day**.

10. How We Respond

Once a concern is raised:

- It will be triaged to determine the appropriate response
- Investigations will be swift, fair, and conducted by impartial individuals
- Urgent safety issues will prompt immediate action, including site visits if necessary
- You will receive updates within **five working days**

Where possible, we will share outcomes while respecting privacy laws and due process.

11. Untrue Allegations

If a concern is raised in good faith but not substantiated, no action will be taken against the individual. However, knowingly false or malicious allegations may lead to disciplinary measures.

12. Escalating Beyond Labyrinth Education

If you believe your concern remains unresolved, you can contact:

- **Ofsted:** 0300 123 3155 | whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
 - **CQC:** 0300 061 6161 | enquiries@cqc.org.uk
 - **Protect** (independent charity): 020 3117 2520
 - **Citizens Advice**, police, HSE, or your local safeguarding team
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13. Governance and Learning

We treat every concern as an opportunity to grow. All whistleblowing reports and responses are reviewed by our **People Board**, made of members from our board of governors. Findings, themes, and actions are shared with the **Board of Governors** to drive whole-organisation learning.

We conduct regular audits on whistleblower experience and use insights to strengthen systems and culture.

14. References

This policy aligns with:

- **Employment Rights Act 1996**
 - **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**
 - **Equality Act 2010**
 - **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974**
 - **ACAS Guidance on Whistleblowing**
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