



## Whistleblowing Policy 2023

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors of the company as well as Trustees of the exempt charity; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director. This Policy applies to all academies within the Link Academy Trust.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. We are committed to the provision of education with honesty and integrity and expect all staff to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported to the appropriate person as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 1.2. This policy covers employees, governors, trustees, members, consultants, contractors, casual workers, agency workers and volunteers.

### 2. What is 'whistleblowing'?

- 2.1. Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This includes bribery, fraud or other criminal activity, unauthorised use of public funds, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damages to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations. For the avoidance of doubt, this is not an exhaustive list.

### 3. How to raise a concern

- 3.1. We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. However, if you would prefer not to raise it with your line manager for any reason you should report it to a member of our senior leadership team or the designated lead person for safeguarding. Complaints about the CEO should be reported to the Chair of Trustees.
- 3.2. We will listen to and take seriously all concerns. We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meeting under this policy.

## **4. External disclosures**

- 4.1. The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the Link Academy Trust. However, we understand that in some cases you might feel it is necessary to take your concerns to an external organisation. Hopefully, in most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone external, and you will first attempt to discuss them internally.
- 4.2. If you feel it is necessary to raise your concerns externally, please be mindful of confidentiality – confidential information should not be disclosed. The following external organisations may be in a position to assist you:
- a) Department for Education
  - b) Police
  - c) Social Services
  - d) Ofsted
  - e) Relevant professional bodies and/or regulatory organisations
  - f) Local Authority
  - g) Education Funding Agency

## **5. Confidentiality**

- 5.1. We hope that all staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. All concerns will be treated in confidence, but completely anonymous disclosures can be difficult to investigate. If you wish to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern.

## **6. Protection and support for whistle-blowers**

- 6.1. We aim to encourage openness and will support whistle-blowers who raise genuine concerns, even if you turn out to be mistaken. Whistle-blowers must not be subjected to any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. However, if we conclude that a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistle-blower may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 6.2. We may however take disciplinary action against you if you make claims that are found to be knowingly false, malicious, or for personal gain.

## **7. What if you still have concerns?**

- 7.1. If you are dissatisfied and feel that concerns you have raised have not been dealt with appropriately, you can take the matter up with any of the organisations listed at 4.2 above.

This Policy is reviewed and approved by the Audit Committee on a 2-yearly cycle.

**Reviewed and approved by the Audit Committee: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Next review:** Autumn 2025