



HIGHFIELDS SCHOOL

SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY 2023/24

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The safe recruitment of staff in schools is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is an essential factor in creating a safe environment for children to learn. As a school we expect that everyone working with our children shares our commitment to keeping them safe and promoting their welfare at all times. This policy supplements the locally agreed Recruitment and Selection Policy 2023.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the minimum requirements of a recruitment process that will not only attract the best possible applicants to vacancies but also deter prospective applicants who are unsuitable for work with children or young people and identify and reject applicants who are unsuitable for work with children and young people.

To achieve this, we will:

- Ensure that key staff who are involved in the recruitment process will have received safe recruitment training and that every appointment panel includes at least one member of staff who has received safe recruitment training.
- Implement robust recruitment procedures and checks for appointing staff and volunteers to ensure that steps are taken to deter and identify and reject candidates who are unsuitable to work with children, or who are disqualified from working with children, or do not have the suitable skills and experience for the intended role.
- Keep and maintain a single central record of recruitment and vetting checks in line with DfE requirements (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023).
- Ensure that the terms of any contract with a contractor or agency requires them to adopt and implement measures described in this procedure and monitor their compliance with these measures.
- Require our staff who are convicted or cautioned for any offence during their employment with the school to notify the school in writing of the offence and the penalty.

Planning and Advertising

It is essential to plan the recruitment exercise carefully so that safeguards are not skimmed or overlooked. We will make sure from the outset that all the material e.g. the application form, job description, person specification and information or guidance for applicants that will form part of the candidate information pack, is up to date and clearly sets out the extent of the relationships and contact with children, and the degree of responsibility for children that the person will have in the position to be filled.

When a vacancy is advertised, the advertisement will always include a statement about our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and reference to the need for the successful applicant to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check, as well as the usual details of the post, salary, and qualifications required.

We will clarify whether the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected' so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account.

The vacancies page on our website contains our Privacy Notice for candidates which contains details of additional due-diligence checks to be completed for all shortlisted candidates, including:

- Completing a self-declaration of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children.
- Online searches will be undertaken to help identify any incidents or issues that may have happened and are publicly available online.

Applications

The school recruits through TES and WMJobs wherever possible and will make application forms available under exceptional circumstances.

Our application forms will include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if the applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity).

CVs are not accepted as a replacement but may be submitted in addition. The application form requires candidates to provide:

- Full identifying details of the applicant including current and former names, current address, and National Insurance number.
- A statement of any academic and/or vocational qualifications the applicant has obtained that are relevant to the position for which they are applying, with details of the awarding body and date of award.
- Applicants for teaching posts will be asked for their DfE reference number.
- Confirmation whether they are qualified to work in the UK.
- A full history of post-secondary education, voluntary work and employment, with start and end dates, with any gaps being identified and clarified.
- A declaration of any family or close relationship to existing employees or governors.
- Details of referees. One referee should be the applicant's current or most recent employer, and normally two referees should be sufficient. Where an applicant who is not currently working with children but has done so in the past it is important that a reference is also obtained from the employer by whom the person was most recently employed in work with children.
- A statement of the personal qualities and experience that the applicant believes are relevant to their suitability for the post advertised and how they meet the person specification.

Our application process will state:

- The successful applicant will be required to undertake an Enhanced DBS check.
- The prospective employer will seek references on shortlisted candidates and may approach previous employers for information to verify particular experience or qualifications, before interview.
- It is an offence to apply for the role if the individual is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.
- If the applicant is currently working with children, on either a paid or voluntary basis, their current employer will be asked about disciplinary offences relating to children, including any for which the penalty is time expired (that is where a warning could no longer be taken into account in any new disciplinary hearing for example) and whether the applicant has been the subject of any child protection concern, and if so, the outcome of any enquiry or disciplinary procedure. If the applicant is not currently working with children but has done so in the past, that previous employer will be asked about those issues.
- Providing false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected, or summary dismissal if the applicant has been selected, and possible referral to the police.

Job Description / Person Specification

These will clearly state the individual's responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and will also make clear that a commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is an essential part of the role and that these issues will be explored as part of the interview process.

Scrutinising and Shortlisting

All applications are scrutinised to ensure that they are fully and properly completed, that the information provided is consistent, does not contain any discrepancies, and identifies any gaps in employment. Incomplete applications are not accepted.

Our shortlisting process will involve at least two people and will consider any anomalies, discrepancies or gaps in employment and the reasons given for these. These will be noted so that they can be taken up as part of the consideration of whether to shortlist the applicant. As well as reasons for obvious gaps in employment, the reasons for a history of repeated changes of employment without any clear career or salary progression, or a mid-career move from a permanent post to supply teaching or temporary work, also need to be explored and verified.

All shortlisted candidates will be required to complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at interview stage. The information asked for will include:

- If they have a criminal history.
- Whether they are included on the barred list.
- Whether they are prohibited from teaching.
- Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law applicable in England and Wales.
- Any relevant overseas information.
- A signature to confirm that the information provided is true.

An online search will be undertaken on shortlisted candidates. The results of all searches will be made available to the interview panel. This may help identify any incidents or issues which can be explored further at interview.

References

References are only accepted directly from the referee. Testimonials or open references are unacceptable. References are sought on all shortlisted candidates, including internal ones, and are usually obtained before interview so that any issues of concern they raise can be explored further with the referee, and taken up with the candidate at interview.

In exceptional circumstances it might not be possible to obtain references prior to interview, either because of delay on the part of the referee or because a candidate objects to their current employer being approached at that stage.

A copy of the job description and person specification for the post for which the person is applying is included with all requests, and every request asks:

- About the referee's relationship with the candidate.
- Whether the referee is satisfied that the person has the ability and is suitable to undertake the job in question, and for specific comments about the applicant's suitability for the post, and how they have demonstrated that they meet the person specification.
- Whether the referee is completely satisfied that the candidate is suitable to work with children, and, if not, for specific details of the referee's concerns and the reasons why the referee believes the person might be unsuitable.

Reference requests addressed to a candidate's current or previous employer in work with children should also ask for:

- Specific comments about the applicant's performance history and conduct.

- Details of any disciplinary procedures the applicant has been subject to in which the disciplinary sanction is current.
- Details of any disciplinary procedures the applicant has been subject to involving issues related to the safety and welfare of children or young people, including any in which the disciplinary sanction has expired, and the outcome of those.
- Details of any allegations or concerns that have been raised about the applicant that relate to the safety and welfare of children or young people or behaviour towards children or young people, and the outcome of those concerns

References will be checked to ensure that all key areas have been addressed and also compared to the application form to ensure that the information provided is consistent. Any discrepancies will be taken up with the applicant at interview and with the referee before any appointment is made.

Where it has not been possible to obtain references before the interview, any concerns that are subsequently raised will need to be resolved before the appointment is confirmed.

Invitation to Interview

The invitation to interview will make it clear that the successful candidate will need to have their identity confirmed and that an Enhanced DBS check will be required. Candidates are instructed to bring documentary evidence of their identity and their educational and professional qualifications to the interview. Copies of these are kept on file for the successful candidate. Candidates will be asked to provide their self-declaration prior to the interview and, if this has been signed electronically, it must be signed in person on the interview date.

Interviews

The selection process will always include a face-to-face professional interview including a question related to safeguarding children. In addition to assessing and evaluating the applicant's suitability for the particular post, the interview panel will also explore:

- The candidate's attitude towards children and young people.
- The candidate's ability to support our agenda for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Gaps in the candidate's employment history.
- Concerns or discrepancies arising from the information provided by the candidate and/or a referee.
- If the candidate wishes to declare anything in light of the requirement for an Enhanced DBS check.

Interview Record Retention

- The school will retain interview notes on all applicants for a 6-month period, after which time the notes will be shredded. The 6-month retention period will allow the school to deal with any data access requests, recruitment complaints or to respond to any complaints made to an employment tribunal.
- Under the Data Protection Act 2018 applicants have a right to request access to notes written about them during the recruitment process. Applicants who wish to access their interview notes must make a subject access request in writing to the chair of the panel/Headteacher within 6 months of the interview date.

Pre-Appointment Checks

The following pre-employment checks will be undertaken, documented and retained:

- Verification of the candidate's identity.
- Verification of the person's right to work in the UK (retained for the duration of employment)

and for two years thereafter).

- Verification of Settled or Pre-Settled status (if applicable).
- Verification of qualifications and any professional registration.
- Verification of the candidate's mental and physical fitness for the post.
- Receipt of at least two satisfactory references.
- A Barred List check.
- A satisfactory Enhanced DBS check.
- A Prohibition from Teaching check (if applicable).
- A Section 128 check (for management positions).
- Additional checks may be required if the candidate has previously lived or worked outside of the UK: If applicable, the school will request from the applicant any further overseas check we consider appropriate including a request to provide proof of their past conduct as a teacher. This should be a letter of professional standing issued by the professional regulating authority in the country in which they worked.

In the following circumstances a report should be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer and/or the police:

- The candidate is found to be on a barred or prohibited list or the Enhanced DBS check shows they have been disqualified from working with children by a Court.
- An applicant has provided false information in, or in support of, their application.
- There are serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with children.

Commencement of Employment

Once all pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed/received, an offer of employment will be made and the contract of employment issued. In certain circumstances it is permitted to agree employment prior to receiving an Enhanced DBS check as long as the other checks detailed above are all completed BEFORE a person's appointment is confirmed. The DBS check must be obtained as soon as practicable after appointment.

Training on safeguarding, safe practice and promoting the welfare of children forms a fundamental part of the school's induction procedures for all staff. School staff are given guidance on professional boundaries and safe working practices. The school adopts a culture of vigilance where all concerns are listened to and taken seriously.

Personnel Files

We will retain the following information, which will make up part of the personnel file for the successful candidate:

- Application form.
- References.
- Criminal Record Self-Declaration Form.
- The outcome of the online search.
- Proof of identification.
- Proof of academic qualifications.
- Proof of Right to Work in the UK (including evidence of settled or pre-settled status where applicable).
- Evidence of medical clearance from Occupational Health.
- Evidence of the DBS clearance and Barred List check.
- Evidence of any other applicable pre-employment checks e.g. Prohibition check (for teaching staff) and/or Section 128 check (for management positions).

Single Central Record of Recruitment Vetting Checks

In line with DfE requirements, the school will keep and maintain a single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The central list will record all staff who are employed at the school, including casual staff, supply staff (whether employed directly or through an agency) volunteers, governors who also work as volunteers, and those who provide additional teaching or instruction for students but who are not staff members, e.g. specialist sports coach or artist.

The SCR will indicate when and who by the following have been completed:

- Identity checks.
- Qualification checks for any qualifications legally required for the job.
- Checks of Right to Work in the UK (including verification of settled or pre-settled status where applicable).
- Barred List check.
- Prohibition from Teaching check (for teaching staff).
- Professional standing letter from the relevant regulatory agency for anyone who has worked or lived outside of the UK.
- Further overseas records where appropriate.
- DBS check.
- Section 128 check (for management positions).

Supply Staff

Where the school is using agency supply staff we will require written confirmation from the supply agency that it has satisfactorily completed the checks described above. The school does not need to carry out checks itself except where there is information contained within the disclosure. However, identity checks must be carried out by the school to check the person arriving is the person the agency intends.

Trainee Teachers

It is the responsibility of the initial teacher training provider to carry out the necessary checks on trainee teachers and provide the school with written confirmation that these checks have been carried out.

Where applicants for initial teacher training are salaried by us, we will ensure that all necessary checks are carried out. Where trainee teachers are fee-funded, we will obtain written confirmation from the training provider that necessary checks have been carried out and that the trainee has been judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children.

Visitors to the School

Visitors to the school sign in and out at Reception and are escorted whilst on the premises by a member of staff. It is not necessary to obtain a DBS Disclosure for:

- Visitors who will only have contact with children with a member of staff present.
- Visitors or contractors who come on site only to carry out emergency repairs or service equipment and who would not be expected to be left unsupervised on school premises.
- People who are on site before or after school or college hours and when children are not present.

Contractors

Children are not allowed in areas where builders are working for health and safety and safeguarding reasons. However, we will ensure that arrangements are in place with contractors, via the contract or

the Facilities Management Company (OCS), to make sure that any of the contractors' staff that come into contact with children undergo appropriate checks. Facilities Management staff should be considered to be Highfields staff and the relevant checks obtained from the employer and safeguarding training conducted. Records of those checks should be maintained in their own Single Central Record. We will request regular updates on staff employed, their DBS status and confirmation of safeguarding training for current and newly appointed staff.

Governors/Trustees/Members

- All trustees, local governors and members will have an Enhanced DBS check without Barred List information. They will have an Enhanced DBS check with Barred List information if working in regulated activity.
- A Section 128 check (to check prohibition on participation in management under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008).
- Identity (non-statutory to record on SCR).
- Right to Work in the UK.
- Other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK.

Alternative Provision/Managed Moves

Where we place students with an alternative provision provider/managed move school, we will obtain written confirmation that they have carried out the appropriate safeguarding checks on individuals working there that we would otherwise perform.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Governors and Trustees to:

- Ensure the school has effective policies and procedures in place for the recruitment of all staff and volunteers in accordance with DfE guidance and legal requirements.
- Monitor the school's compliance with them.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and others involved in the recruitment process to:

- Ensure that the school operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure all appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers who work at the school.
- Monitor contractors' and agencies' compliance with this document.
- Promote the welfare of children and young people at every stage of the procedure.

The Trust Board has delegated responsibility to the Headteacher to lead on all appointments outside of the Senior Leadership and Management Team and other Leadership roles. Trustees and Governors may be involved in staff appointments, but the final decision will rest with the Headteacher. The Headteacher may delegate the selection process of staff outside of the leadership group to other managers in the school but remains responsible for the decision to appoint.

It is also the Headteacher's responsibility to carry out all relevant checks if there are any concerns about an existing staff member's suitability to work with children. There is also a legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to children.

It is the responsibility of all potential and existing workers, including volunteers to comply with this document.

Recruitment Web Site

The school's recruitment website links to the following documents:

Safeguarding Policy

Safer Recruitment Policy

Equality & Diversity Policy

Recruitment Privacy Notice