

Safer Recruitment Policy

January 2021

**Introduction**

The safe recruitment of staff to Park House School (PHS) is an essential element of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupils with whom we are entrusted. Given the significant vulnerabilities of all our pupils and, for some, the inability to communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs and experiences in an easily understood way, this is a vital part of the safeguarding process to which we are fully and unequivocally committed.

**Aims of this policy**

The primary aim of this Safer Recruitment Policy is to ensure that PHS does everything it can to deter, identify and reject anyone who might abuse pupils in any way, or who are otherwise unsuited to work with them, by having appropriate and rigorous procedures for appointing staff.

The aims of the School's recruitment policy are:

* to ensure that the best possible staff are recruited on the basis of their merits, abilities and suitability for the position
* to ensure that all job applicants are considered equally and consistently
  + to ensure that no job applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability or age
  + to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance including the statutory guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE), Keeping Children Safe in Education - September 2020 (KCSiE), the Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015 (the Prevent Duty Guidance) and any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
  + to ensure that the PHS meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.

Senior staff and members of the school’s Development Group who may be involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with the provisions of this policy.

The School has a principle of open competition in its approach to recruitment and will seek to recruit the best applicant for the job.  The recruitment and selection process will ensure the identification of the person best suited to the job at the school, based on the applicant’s abilities, qualifications, experience and merit as measured against the job description and person specification.

The recruitment and selection of staff will be conducted in a professional, timely and responsive manner and in compliance with current employment legislation, and relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance (including KCSiE 2020 and Prevent Duty Guidance).

If a member of staff involved in the recruitment process has a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant they must declare it as soon as they are aware of the individual’s application and have no involvement in the recruitment and selection decision-making process.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**It is the responsibility of the Directors to:**

* ensure the School has effective policies and procedures in place for recruitment of all staff and volunteers in accordance with DfE guidance and legal requirements
* ensure that at least one member of any interviewing panel holds a current certificate in Safer Recruitment gained as a result of successfully completing the relevant training
* monitor the School’s compliance with the= policies, procedures and guidelines.

The Directors and Development Group and any outside professional consultancy it engages are solely responsible for the recruitment of the Principal.

**It is the responsibility of the Principal and other senior staff** involved in recruitment 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 pupils at every stage of the procedure

The Directors and Development Group have delegated responsibility to the Principal and Senior Leadership team to lead in all but Senior Leadership appointments. The Directors and Development Group members may be involved in staff appointments. In such circumstances a joint final decision will be made on the appointment.

**Contractors working within the school**

Prior to commencing work at the school, all contractors must:

* have an enhanced DBS clearance
* have this registered on the school’s Single Central Register

**Recruitment and Selection Process**

1. ***Advertising***

To ensure equality of opportunity, the School will advertise all vacant posts to encourage as wide a field of applicant as possible. Normally this entails an external advertisement as well as advertising on our own school website.

All advertisements will make clear the School’s commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

All documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA).

1. ***Application Forms***

Park House School (PHS) uses its own application form and all applicants for employment will be required to complete an application form containing questions about their academic and full employment history and their suitability for the role. In addition, all applicants are required to account for any gaps or discrepancies in employment history.  Incomplete application forms will not be shortlisted.

The application form will include the applicant’s declaration regarding convictions and working with children, and will make it clear that the post is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.  CVs will not be accepted.

It is unlawful for the School to employ anyone who is barred from working with children.  It is a criminal offence for any person who is barred from working with children to apply for a position at the School.  All applicants will be made aware that providing false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected or summary dismissal if the applicant has been selected, and referral to the police and/or the DBS.

1. ***Job Descriptions and Person Specifications***

A **job description** is a key document in the recruitment process, and must be finalised prior to taking any other steps in the recruitment process.  It will clearly and accurately set out the duties and responsibilities of the job role.

The **person specification** is of equal importance and informs the selection decision.  It details the skills, experience, abilities and expertise that are required to do the job.   The person specification will include a specific reference to suitability to work with children.

1. ***References***

References for shortlisted applicants will be sent for immediately after shortlisting.  The only exception is where an applicant has indicated on their application form that they do not wish their current employer to be contacted at that stage.  In such cases, this reference will be taken up immediately after the interview.

All offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of a minimum of two references which are considered satisfactory by the School.  One of the references should be from the applicant's current or most recent employer.  If the current / most recent employment does / did not involve work with children, then the second reference should be from the employer with whom the applicant most recently worked with children.  The referee must not be a relative.  References will always be sought and obtained directly from the referee and their purpose is to provide objective and factual information to support appointment decisions.

All referees will be asked whether they believe the applicant is suitable for the job for which they have applied and whether they have any reason to believe that the applicant is unsuitable to work with children.  Referees will also be asked to confirm that the applicant has not been radicalised so that they do not support terrorism or any form of "extremism".

Please note that no questions will be asked about health or medical fitness prior to any offer of employment being made.

Any discrepancies or anomalies will be followed up.  Direct contact by phone will be undertaken with each referee to verify the reference.

The School does not accept open references, testimonials or references from relatives.

1. ***Interviews***

There will always be a face-to-face interview, and a minimum of two interviewers will see the applicants for the vacant position.  The interview process will explore the applicant’s ability to carry out the job description and meet the person specification.  It will enable the panel to explore any anomalies or gaps have been identified in order to satisfy themselves that the chosen applicant can meet the safeguarding criteria (in line with Safer Recruitment Training).

Any information in regard to past disciplinary action or allegations, cautions or convictions will be discussed and considered in the circumstances of the individual case during the interview process, if it has not been disclosed on the application form.

At least one member of any interviewing panel will have undertaken Safer Recruitment Training or refresher training as applicable.

All applicants who are invited to an interview will be required to bring evidence of their identity, address and qualifications.  Only original documents will be accepted and photocopies will be taken.  Unsuccessful applicant documents will be destroyed six months after the recruitment programme.

1. ***Offer of employment and new employee process***

In accordance with the recommendations set out in KCSiE and the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations the School carries out a number of pre-employment checks in respect of all prospective employees.

If it is decided to make an offer of employment following the formal interview, any such offer will be conditional on the following:

* + the agreement of a mutually acceptable start date and the signing of a contract incorporating the School's standard terms and conditions of employment
  + verification of the applicant's identity (where that has not previously been verified)
  + the receipt of two references (one of which should be from the applicant's most recent employer) which the School considers to be satisfactory

**For positions which involve "teaching work":**

the School being satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of a sanction, restriction or prohibition issued by the National College for Teaching and Leadership, or any predecessor or successor body, or by a regulator of the teaching profession in any other European Economic Area country which prevents the applicant working at the School or which, in the School's opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work at the School

the School being satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of any proceedings before a professional conduct panel or equivalent body in the UK or any other country for any reason which prevents the applicant working at the School or which, in the School's opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work at the School

**Where the position amounts to "regulated activity":**

the receipt of an enhanced disclosure from the DBS which the School considers to be satisfactory;

confirmation that the applicant is not named on the Children's Barred List\*

confirmation that the applicant is not subject to a direction under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 which prohibits, disqualifies or restricts them from providing education at a school, taking part in the management of an independent school or working in a position which involves regular contact with children;

confirmation that the applicant is not subject to a direction under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 which prohibits, disqualifies or restricts them from being involved in the management of an independent school

verification of the applicant's medical fitness for the role

verification of the applicant's right to work in the UK

any further checks which are necessary as a result of the applicant having lived or worked outside of the UK

verification of professional qualifications which the School deems a requirement for the post, or which the applicant otherwise cites in support of their application (where they have not been previously verified).

\*The School is not permitted to check the Children's Barred List unless an individual will be engaging in "regulated activity".

The School is required to carry out an enhanced DBS check for all Directors, staff, supply staff and members of the Development Group who will be engaging in regulated activity.  However, the School can also carry out an enhanced DBS check on a person who would be carrying out regulated activity but for the fact that they do not carry out their duties frequently enough i.e. roles which would amount to regulated activity if carried out more frequently.

Whether a position amounts to "regulated activity" must therefore be considered by the School in order to decide which checks are appropriate.  It is however likely that in nearly all cases the School will be able to carry out an enhanced DBS check and a Children's Barred List check.

A personal file checklist will be used to track and audit paperwork obtained in accordance with Safer Recruitment Training.  The checklist will be retained on personal files.

**Appendices:**

**1. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 does not apply to positions which involve working with, or having access to pupils.  Therefore, any convictions and cautions that would normally be considered ‘SPENT’ **must be** declared when applying for any position at Park House School.

**2. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Certificate (formerly known as CRB Disclosure)**

The School applies for an enhanced disclosure from the DBS and a check of the Children's Barred List (now known as an Enhanced Check for Regulated Activity) in respect of all positions at the School which amount to "regulated activity" as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended).  The purpose of carrying out an Enhanced Check for Regulated Activity is to identify whether an applicant is barred from working with children by inclusion on the Children's Barred List and to obtain other relevant suitability information.

It is the School's policy that the DBS disclosure **should be** obtained before the commencement of employment of **any** new employee.

However, provided that the DBS application has been made in advance of the offer of employment , but has not yet been received by the candidate and seen by the School Administrator, the Principal may allow the member of staff to commence work subject to the following conditions:

• a satisfactory check of the barred list if the person will be working in regulated activity;

• all other relevant checks have been completed satisfactorily;

• appropriate safeguarding measures are taken (for example, loose supervision).

It is the School’s policy to re-check employee’s DBS Certificates every three years and in addition any employee that takes leave for more than three months (i.e.: maternity leave, career break etc.) must be re-checked before they return back to work.

Members of staff at PHS are aware of their obligation to inform the Principal or SBM of any cautions or convictions that arise between these checks taking place.

**3. Definition of Regulated Activity and Frequency**

Any position undertaken at, or on behalf of the School will amount to "regulated activity" if it is carried out:

* frequently, meaning once a week or more
* satisfies the "period condition", meaning four times or more in a 30-day period
* provides the opportunity for contact with children.

Roles which are carried out on an unpaid / voluntary basis will only amount to regulated activity if, in addition to the above, they are carried out on an unsupervised basis.

The School is not permitted to check the Children's Barred List unless an individual will be engaging in "regulated activity".  The School is required to carry out an enhanced DBS check for all staff, supply staff and governors who will be engaging in regulated activity.  However, the School will also carry out an enhanced DBS check on a person who would be carrying out regulated activity but for the fact that they do not carry out their duties frequently enough i.e. roles which would amount to regulated activity if carried out more frequently.

Where convictions are declared or become apparent within the DBS system, a risk assessment will be carried out to decide whether or not the individual concerned is able to undertake an offer of employment or continue to be in employment at the school

DBS checks will still be requested for applicants with recent periods of overseas residence and those with little or no previous UK residence.

**4. Portability of DBS Certificates Checks**

Staff may wish to join the DBS Update Service if they are likely to require another check in the future.  Applicants may sign up to the Service if their check was issued after 17 June 2013, for a fee, which is payable by the applicant.

**5. Copies of DBS Checks**

The DBS no longer issue Disclosure Certificates to employers, therefore employees/applicants should bring their Certificate to the School Administrator for copying. (For employees within 7 days of issue or applicants before they commence work or any project involving regulated activity).

**6. Dealing with convictions**

The School operates a formal procedure if a DBS Certificate is returned with details of convictions.  Consideration will be given to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and also:

* the nature, seriousness and relevance of the offence
* how long ago the offence occurred
* one-off or history of offences
* changes in circumstances
* decriminalisation and remorse

A formal meeting will take place face-to-face to establish the facts with the SBM.   A decision will be made following this meeting. In the event that relevant information (whether in relation to previous convictions or otherwise) is volunteered by an applicant during the recruitment process or obtained through a disclosure check, the SBM will evaluate all of the risk factors above before a position is offered or confirmed.

If an applicant wishes to dispute any information contained in a disclosure, they may do so by contacting the DBS.  In cases where the applicant would otherwise be offered a position were it not for the disputed information, the School may, where practicable and at its discretion, defer a final decision about the appointment until the applicant has had a reasonable opportunity to challenge the disclosure information.

**7. Proof of identity, Right to Work in the UK, Verification of Qualifications and/or professional status and checks within the European Economic Area (EEA)**

All applicants invited to attend an interview at the School will be required to bring their identification documentation such as a passport, birth certificate, driving licence etc. with them as proof of identity/eligibility to work in UK in accordance with those set out in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and DBS identity checking guidelines. The School does not discriminate on the grounds of age.

In addition, for any potential employee who has worked outside of the UK and within the EEA should the school will check for information about any teacher sanction or restriction that has been imposed by a professional regulating authority in the European Economic Area (EEA). This check is applicable to both foreign nationals and UK nationals who have taught in the EEA. This check is carried out using the NCTL Teacher Services system. Only restrictions imposed on or after 18 January 2016 will be displayed.

Where an applicant claims to have changed their name by deed poll or any other means (e.g. marriage, adoption, statutory declaration) they will be required to provide documentary evidence of the change.

In addition, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have actually obtained any academic or vocational qualifications legally required for the position and claimed in their application form.

**7. Medical Fitness**

The School is legally required to verify the medical fitness of anyone to be appointed to a post at the School, **after** an offer of employment has been made but **before** the appointment can be confirmed.

All successful applicants are requested to complete an Employee Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire. This is then reviewed by a member of the Senior Leadership team and where appropriate a doctor’s medical report or other report(e.g. Occupational Health) may be required. This information will be reviewed against the Job Description and Person Specification for the particular role, together with details of any other physical or mental requirements of the role.

The School is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010.  No job offer will be withdrawn without first consulting with the applicant, obtaining medical evidence and considering reasonable adjustments.

**8. Overseas checks**

Applicants who have lived/travelled abroad for more than 3 months will need to obtain a criminal record check from the relevant country. The applicant will not be permitted to commence work until the overseas information has been received and is considered satisfactory by the School.

9. **Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS)**

If a suitable applicant is a national of a non-EEA country, a CoS may be required. Before any offer of employment is made, the Principal will consult with the SBM and its HR consultancy to establish whether the School is able to offer a Sponsorship Certificates.

Criteria for issuing a CoS are:

* the job is in a “designated shortage” occupation
* it passes the Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT)
* the job is at NQF6 Level or above
* minimum salary levels as stated by the UKVI are met

In addition to CoS the applicant must apply for entry clearance/leave to remain through the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and comply with the UKVI requirements.

The process can take up to three months and staff cannot, under any circumstances, be employed until permission is given.

Detailed advice on the above is available from the school’s HR consultants.

**10. Induction Programme**

All new employees will be given an induction programme which will clearly identify the School policies and procedures, including the Child Protection Policy, the Code of Conduct and Part One and Appendix A of KCSiE, and make clear the expectations which will govern how staff carry out their roles and responsibilities.

This induction meeting will take place within the first week of a new employee taking up their position.

**11. Single Centralised Register of Members of Staff**

In addition to the various staff records kept in School and on individual personnel files, a Single Centralised Record of recruitment and vetting checks is kept in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 requirements.  This is kept up-to-date and retained by the School Administrator.  The Single Centralised Register will contain details of the following: -

* All employees who are employed to work at the School;
* all employees who are employed as supply staff to the School whether employed directly or through an agency;
* all others who have been chosen by the School to work in regular contact with pupils.  This will cover volunteers, Governors, peripatetic staff and people brought into the School to provide additional teaching or instruction for pupils but who are not staff members e.g. sports coaches etc.

A designated member of the school’s Management Committee will be responsible for auditing the Single Centralised Register and reporting his/her findings to the full Governing Body during the Summer Term meeting.

**12. Record Retention / Data Protection**

The School is legally required to undertake the above pre-employment checks.  Therefore, if an applicant is successful in their application, the School will retain on their personnel file any relevant information provided as part of the application process.  This will include copies of documents used to verify identity, right to work in the UK, medical fitness and qualifications.  Medical information may be used to help the School to discharge its obligations as an employer e.g. so that the School may consider reasonable adjustments if an employee suffers from a disability or to assist with any other workplace issue.

This documentation will be retained by the School for the duration of the successful applicant's employment with the School. All information retained on employees is kept centrally in the School Office in a locked and secure cabinet.

The same policy applies to any suitability information obtained about volunteers involved with School activities.

PHS will retain all interview notes on all unsuccessful applicants for a period of 6 months, after which time the notes will be confidentially destroyed (i.e. shredded).  The 6-month retention period is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**13. Ongoing Employment**

PHS recognises that safer recruitment and selection is not just about the start of employment, but should be part of a larger policy framework for all staff. The School will therefore provide ongoing training and support for all staff, as identified through the Professional Development Review/Supervision procedure.

**14.** **Leaving Employment at Park House School**

Despite the best efforts to recruit safely there may be occasions when allegations of serious misconduct or abuse against children and young people are raised.  This policy is primarily concerned with the promotion of safer recruitment and details the pre-employment checks that will be undertaken prior to employment being confirmed.  Whilst these are pre-employment checks the School also has a legal duty to make a referral to the DBS in circumstances where an individual:

* has applied for a position at the School despite being barred from working with children
* has been removed by the School from working in regulated activity (whether paid or unpaid), or has resigned prior to being removed, because they have harmed, or pose a risk of harm to a child.

If the individual referred to the DBS is a teacher, the School may also decide to make a referral to the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

**15. Contractors and agency staff**

Contractors engaged by the School must complete the same checks for their employees that the School is required to complete for its staff.  The School requires confirmation that these checks have been completed before employees of the Contractor can commence work at the School.

The checks required on employees of third parties and contractors are complex. Guidance is given in the ISI Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements document and reference to following the procedures outlined there and referring any queries to ISI will be undertaken.

Agencies who supply staff to the School must also complete the pre-employment checks which the School would otherwise complete for its staff.  Again, the School requires confirmation that these checks have been completed before an individual can commence work at the School.

The School will independently verify the identity of staff supplied by contractors or an agency ~~in~~ and will require the provision of the original DBS certificate before contractors or agency staff can commence work at the School.

**16. Visiting Speakers (and Prevent Duty)**

The Prevent Duty Guidance requires the School to have clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers, whether invited by staff or by pupils, are suitable and appropriately supervised.

The School is not permitted to obtain a DBS disclosure or Children's Barred List information on any visiting speaker who does not engage in regulated activity at the School or perform any other regular duties for or on behalf of the School.

All visiting speakers will be subject to the School's usual visitors signing in protocol. This will include signing in and out at Reception, the wearing of a visitors badge at all times and being escorted by a fully vetted member of staff between appointments.

The School will also obtain such formal or informal background information about a visiting speaker as is reasonable in the circumstances to decide whether to invite and/or permit a speaker to attend the School.  In doing so the School will always have regard to the Prevent Duty Guidance and the definition of "extremism" set out in KCSiE which states:

*"'Extremism' is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.  We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.  Terrorist groups very often draw on extremist ideas developed by extremist organisations."*

In fulfilling its Prevent Duty obligations the School does not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability or age.

**17. Volunteers**

The School will request an enhanced DBS disclosure and Children's Barred List information on all volunteers undertaking regulated activity with pupils at or on behalf of the School (the definition of regulated activity set out above will be applied to all volunteers).

Under no circumstances will the School permit an unchecked volunteer to have unsupervised contact with pupils.

It is the School's policy that a new DBS certificate is required for volunteers who will engage in regulated activity but who have not been involved in any activities with the School for three consecutive months or more.  Those volunteers who are likely to be involved in activities with the School on a regular basis may be required to sign up to the DBS update service as this permits the School to obtain up to date criminal records information without delay prior to each new activity in which a volunteer participates.

In addition, the School will seek to obtain such further suitability information about a volunteer as it considers appropriate in the circumstances.  This may include (but is not limited to) the following:

* formal or informal information provided by staff, parents and other volunteers;
* character references from the volunteer's place of work or any other relevant source; and
* an informal safer recruitment interview.

**18. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The SBM will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is monitored and evaluated throughout the School.  This will be undertaken through formal audits of job vacancies and a yearly Safer Recruitment Evaluation audit which will be presented to the Principal to report to the Management Committee.

**19. Taxi Drivers and Escorts in Taxis bringing children to and from school**

* **Responsibility of the Local Authority commissioning taxi services**

All the children at PHS arrive and depart in taxis commissioned by their Local Authority. As well as the drivers, some children also have escorts to accompany them. Both drivers and escorts are employed by the Local Authority, who are responsible for undertaking all the relevant safeguarding checks. Once these are completed, the drivers and escorts are issued with badges that verify that these checks have been completed satisfactorily.

* **Park House School’s responsibilities.**

The school is responsible for checking that all adult occupants of a taxi have the appropriate badges indicating that they are accredited by their Local Authority.

This task is undertaken by the member of staff responsible for organising the taxis at the beginning and end of the day. As drivers and escorts usually remain the same for the duration of their contract, he undertakes these checks at the following points of the school year:

* At the start of the Autumn Term
* At the start of the Spring Term
* At the start of the Summer Term

Additional checks are then made if:

* A different vehicle arrives for a child
* A different adult, escort or driver is seen in the car
* Ad-hoc times at his or the principal’s discretion