ABBEY CofE INFANT SCHOOL

SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY

Updated: 1/09/26

Review Date: 1/9/27

1. Purpose and Aims

Abbey CofE Infant School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, governors, trustees, volunteers, contractors and agency workers to share this commitment. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and other relevant safeguarding procedures.

The school will ensure that all recruitment and selection practices reflect this commitment. All successful candidates will be subject to the pre-employment checks required by Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and other relevant legislation. Depending upon the role, these may include:

- Verification of identity
- Enhanced DBS check
- Children's Barred List check
- Teacher Prohibition check
- Section 128 direction check
- Right to work in the UK checks
- Verification of qualifications and professional status
- Overseas criminal record and professional standing checks
- Health or fitness to work assessment where appropriate
- Any other checks required by law or statutory guidance.

Robust recruitment and selection procedures help deter, identify and reject unsuitable applicants and help ensure that those appointed are suitable to work with children. All appointments will be made on merit and in accordance with employment legislation, equality legislation and statutory safeguarding guidance.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Agreeing and monitoring policies and procedures relating to safer recruitment.
- Ensuring recruitment practices comply with current legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring appropriate checks are undertaken on staff, volunteers, contractors and agency workers.
- Appointing appropriate recruitment panels.
- Ensuring at least one person on every interview panel has completed safer recruitment training.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of recruitment procedures.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity throughout recruitment and selection.
- Monitoring the Single Central Record.
- Ensuring recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly in response to legislative and safeguarding changes.
- Ensuring that recruitment panel members understand safer recruitment responsibilities under KCSIE.

The Recruitment Panel is responsible for:

- Preparing recruitment documentation.
- Shortlisting applicants against the person specification.
- Ensuring safeguarding is explored throughout the recruitment process.
- Assessing candidates' suitability to work with children.

- Reviewing references and recruitment information.
- Addressing any concerns, discrepancies or gaps in employment history.
- Conducting recruitment activities fairly and consistently.
- Reaching appointment decisions based on evidence and suitability.

The Appointing Officer is responsible for:

- Managing the recruitment process.
- Acting as a point of contact for applicants.
- Reviewing applications and identifying areas requiring clarification.
- Organising interviews.
- Ensuring the recruitment process complies with school policy and statutory requirements.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring safer recruitment practices are implemented effectively.
- Ensuring all pre-employment checks are completed.
- Ensuring suitable safeguarding arrangements exist for volunteers, contractors and agency staff.
- Ensuring new staff receive safeguarding induction and training.
- Promoting safeguarding throughout the recruitment process.
- Ensuring staff are familiar with this policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for:

- Advising recruitment panels regarding safeguarding matters.
- Supporting decisions where references or recruitment checks identify safeguarding concerns.
- Ensuring safeguarding information is appropriately considered during recruitment.

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) is responsible for:

- Ensuring recruitment information is processed and retained in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and school policies.

3. Equal Opportunities

The school is committed to equality of opportunity and ensuring that recruitment and selection decisions are made fairly, consistently and objectively.

No applicant will be discriminated against on the basis of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants throughout the recruitment process where required.

4. The Recruitment Process

a) Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

All job descriptions will:

- Be reviewed regularly.
- Include safeguarding responsibilities.
- Identify whether the role involves regulated activity.
- Clearly describe duties and responsibilities.

All person specifications will:

- Set out qualifications, experience and competencies required.
- Include suitability to work with children.
- Identify safeguarding expectations.
- Explain how requirements will be assessed throughout selection.

b) Advertising

All vacant posts will normally be advertised externally to ensure equality of opportunity and encourage as wide a field of candidates as possible. However, where there is a reasonable expectation that there are sufficient suitably qualified internal candidates, where employees are at risk of redundancy, or where other organisational circumstances justify doing so, vacancies may be advertised internally before external recruitment is undertaken.

All advertisements will:

- Clearly state the skills, abilities, experience, attitude and behaviours required.
- Explain the safeguarding requirements of the role, i.e., to what extent the role will involve contact with children and will they be engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.
- Explain that pre-employment checks are required.

Advertisements will normally include the following statement:

"[School Name] is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This post is subject to safer recruitment procedures including satisfactory references, online searches on shortlisted candidates, enhanced DBS clearance and any other checks required under Keeping Children Safe in Education."

c) Information for Applicants

Applicants will be provided with:

- Job description.
- Person specification.
- Application form.
- Information about the school.
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Information regarding online searches.

- Details of pre-employment checks.
- Salary and information regarding terms and conditions of employment.
- Closing date information.

CVs will not be accepted as a substitute for a completed application form.

d) Application Forms

Applicants will be required to provide:

- Full personal details, including date of birth, current address, contact telephone number(s), email address and national insurance number.
- Current and previous names.
- A full employment history since leaving school (including education, employment and voluntary work) including reasons for any gaps in employment.
- Details of qualifications, including the awarding body and date of award.
- Explanations for gaps in employment or education.
- Details of referees/references.
- 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.
- A declaration regarding criminal convictions and safeguarding matters where appropriate.

All shortlisted candidates who have applied online for a post will be asked to sign a copy of their application form at the interview.

e) Shortlisting

Applications will be scrutinised to ensure that they are fully and properly completed, that the information provided is consistent and does not contain any discrepancies and to identify any gaps in employment. As well as reasons for 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 or temporary work, will also need to be explored and verified during the interview process.

The selection panel, which will comprise at least two people, will shortlist applicants against the person specification for the post. The criteria for selection criteria will be consistently applied to all applicants. The section panel will agree the applicants to be invited to interview.

The school will not request health information before a conditional offer has been made except where permitted by law.

Shortlisted candidates will be asked to complete a self-declaration regarding their criminal record and/or provide any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children.

If the field of applicants is considered to be weak, the post may be re-advertised.

f) References and Employment History

Two references, one of which must be from the candidate's current/most recent employer, will be taken up on all shortlisted candidates (including internal candidates) before the interview stage so that any discrepancies may be probed during the interview process.

Candidates are entitled to see and receive copies of their employment references and should request these from their referees.

References will be sought directly from the referee and, where necessary, they will be contacted to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies, or where information provided is insufficient or vague. Detailed written records will be kept of such exchanges.

Where electronic references are provided, the school will ensure that the reference originated from a legitimate source.

Where necessary, previous employers who have not been named as referees may be contacted to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies. Detailed written records will be kept of such exchanges.

If a candidate for a post working with children is not currently employed in a post working with children, a reference will be sought from the most recent employment in which the candidate has worked with children to confirm details of the candidate's employment and their reasons for leaving.

If the candidate has no previous employment history, then it is acceptable to seek references from people who can comment meaningfully on the candidate's character, conduct and suitability to work with children. Examples could include a university, college or school leader/teacher, a supervisor from a voluntary role or a character reference from someone in a professional standing who has known them for a significant period of time and is not a family member or friend.

Reference requests will ask the referee to confirm, in writing:

- The referee's relationship with the candidate.
- Details of the candidate's current post and salary.
- The candidate's performance history and conduct.
- Whether the candidate has been subject to capability procedures and the outcome of this.
- Whether the candidate has been subject to disciplinary action relating to the safety and welfare of children, including where the sanction has expired, and the outcome of this.
- Details of any substantiated allegations or concerns about the candidate relating to the safety and welfare of children.
- Whether the referee has any reservations as to the candidate's suitability to work with children and young people (if so, the school will ask for specific details of the concerns and the reasons why the referee believes the candidate may be unsuitable to work with children).
- The candidate's suitability for the post with explicit reference to the job description and person specification.

In accordance with Section 60 of the Equality Act, employers should not be asking for any information pertaining to health (including sickness absence records) in reference requests or during selection processes (including interviews). This is to ensure that there can be no suggestion that you have discriminated on the grounds of potential disabilities. This information can be requested once a conditional offer has been made.

All appointments are subject to satisfactory references, vetting procedures, and DBS clearance.

References are the "property" of the selection panel and strict confidentiality will be observed. Employer testimonials, i.e., those provided by the candidate and/or marked 'to whom it may concern' will not be accepted. References must be in writing and be specific to the job for which the candidate has applied. The selection panel will not accept references from relatives or people writing solely in the capacity as a friend of the candidate, for any post. References will be verified, and any discrepancies or areas of potential concern will be discussed with the candidate at the interview.

g) Online Searches on Shortlisted Candidates

As part of the shortlisting process, the school will consider carrying out an online search, via an online search engine, as part of its due diligence on shortlisted candidates. The purpose of the search is to identify any publicly available information that may be relevant to the candidate's suitability to work with children, professional conduct, safeguarding responsibilities, or the reputation of the school. This process forms part of the school's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The school will only review information that is publicly available and will not seek to gain access to private social media accounts or restricted content. Candidates will be informed within the recruitment documentation that online searches may be undertaken as part of the recruitment process.

Online searches will be conducted consistently and fairly for all shortlisted candidates for the same vacancy. Searches will be undertaken by an appropriately trained member of staff who is not involved in the decision-making process wherever practicable, in order to minimise the risk of bias and unlawful discrimination. Any information relating solely to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 will be disregarded. Relevant findings will be shared only where they relate to safeguarding, professional conduct, potential reputational risk, criminal behaviour, unlawful activity, extremist views, discrimination, harassment, violence, abuse, or other matters that may affect suitability to work with children.

Where a search identifies information that may be relevant to the recruitment decision, the candidate will be given an opportunity to discuss and explain the information during the interview process before any decision is made. The existence of information online will not automatically preclude a candidate from appointment, and all findings will be considered fairly, objectively and proportionately.

The school will maintain an appropriate record that an online search has been conducted and will retain any information relied upon in accordance with data protection legislation, the school's Data Protection Policy and Records Retention Schedule. Information that is not relevant to the recruitment process will not be retained.

Examples of matters that may warrant further exploration with a candidate include:

- Evidence of conduct that may indicate a risk to children or vulnerable persons.
- Publicly available information suggesting unlawful behaviour.
- Discriminatory, abusive, threatening or extremist comments.
- Serious breaches of professional standards or conduct.
- Content that appears inconsistent with information provided as part of the recruitment process.
- Information which raises questions about the candidate's suitability to work in a position of trust with children.

The Headteacher (or delegated recruitment lead) will determine whether any findings are sufficiently relevant to be raised with the candidate and whether advice should be sought

from the school's HR provider, Designated Safeguarding Lead or legal adviser before a recruitment decision is made.

h) Interview

The interview process will assess the merits of each shortlisted candidate against the job requirements and assess their suitability to work with children.

Interviewers will ask appropriately robust and pre-planned questions. The questions asked will be aimed at obtaining evidence of how each candidate meets the requirements of the job description and person specification and each candidate will be assessed against all criteria for the post. The same area of questioning will be covered for each applicant and no discriminatory questions will be asked. The selection process for every post will include exploration of the candidate's understanding of safeguarding issues with a specific question about this.

The interview process should also include a task of some sort where appropriate e.g., observing a teacher applicant teach a class or watching a candidate interact with pupils.

During the interview, further questions may be asked of individuals, seeking clarification or explanation from the details gained in the application form. All applicants will be asked to declare any safeguarding issues in the interview.

Candidates will always be required to:

- explain satisfactorily any gaps in employment.
- explain satisfactorily any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to the selection panel.
- declare any information that is likely to appear on a DBS disclosure.
- demonstrate their capacity to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people.

The interview will also include a discussion of any convictions, cautions or pending prosecutions, other than those protected, that the candidate has declared and is relevant to the prospective employment.

Invitation to interview

All shortlisted candidates will be given the following information:

- Confirmation of the date, time, and place of the interview.
- What the selection process will include (e.g., teach a class, a test, a presentation etc.)
- An instruction to bring proof of identity (that will satisfy DBS requirements) and original documents certifying education or professional qualifications.
- State that all relevant information in relation to the successful candidate will be retained.
- Confirm that appropriate checks will be undertaken for the successful candidate before an unconditional job offer is made.

The interview panel

The interview panel will comprise at least two people, one of whom will be safer recruitment trained. For a senior post, a larger panel will be more appropriate. They

should liaise before the interview to reach consensus about required standards and their assessment criteria, consider any issues, and determine who will ask each question.

i) Conditional Offer and Pre-Employment Checks

Appointments will be subject to satisfactory completion of relevant checks, including where applicable:

- Receipt of at least two satisfactory references.
- Verification of candidate's identity.
- Enhanced DBS check.
- Children's Barred List check.
- Teacher Prohibition check.
- Section 128 direction check.
- Where applicable, overseas criminal record checks for those who have worked and/or lived overseas.
- Health or fitness to work assessment.
- Verification of qualifications.
- Verification of professional status.
- UK residence or permission to work in the UK.
- Childcare disqualification requirements where applicable.

All the above must be closely checked to ensure that they can all be attributed to the same person. These documents will be retained on the personnel file and followed up where there are discrepancies.

A conditional offer may be withdrawn where information obtained through the pre-employment checking process demonstrates that an individual is not suitable for the role.

Where a candidate has been found to be on the Barred List, List 99 or the DBS check shows that they have been disqualified from working with children and/or the candidate has provided false information, or there are serious concerns about the candidate's suitability to work with children, the facts must be reported to the police and/or the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

Where criminal record information is disclosed, the school will undertake an individual risk assessment considering:

- The nature of the role.
- The safeguarding responsibilities involved.
- The seriousness of the information disclosed.
- Time elapsed since the incident.
- Whether it was a one-off incident or a history of incidents.
- Any mitigating circumstances.
- Whether the individual accepted responsibility for what happened.
- Whether the offence has been decriminalised.
- Legal and safeguarding requirements.

A criminal record will not automatically prevent appointment unless prohibited by law.

All necessary checks must normally be completed before employment commences.

j) Induction

There should be an induction programme for all new employees and volunteers regardless of their experience. The induction will include:

- Training and information about the school's policies and procedures.
- Confirmation of the conduct expected of staff within the school.
- Providing support in a manner appropriate for the role which they have been appointed to.
- Provide an opportunity for a new member of staff to discuss any issues or concerns about their role and responsibilities.

The content and nature of the induction programme will vary according to the role and previous experience of the new member of staff or volunteer. However, as far as safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is concerned, the induction programme should include information about and written statements of:

- Policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding and promoting welfare e.g., child protection, anti-bullying, anti-racism, physical intervention/restraint, intimate care, internet safety and any local child protection/safeguarding procedures.
- Safe practice and the standards of conduct and behaviour expected of staff and pupils in the school.
- How and with whom any concerns about those issues should be raised.
- Other relevant personnel procedures e.g. disciplinary, capability and whistleblowing.

The programme should also include attendance at child protection training appropriate to the person's role.

5. Volunteers, Agency Staff and Contractors

Volunteers

The school will undertake appropriate risk assessments and safeguarding checks on volunteers in accordance with KCSIE and the nature of the role. Supervision arrangements will be determined according to risk and duties undertaken.

Agency and Supply Staff

The school will obtain written confirmation that all necessary safer recruitment checks have been completed by the supplying agency.

The school will also:

- Verify identity on arrival.
- Ensure safeguarding information is provided.
- Record information on the Single Central Record where required.

Contractors

Contractors will be subject to appropriate safeguarding arrangements depending upon the nature of their work and level of access to children. Supervision requirements and DBS arrangements will be determined through risk assessment.

6. HR Files and the Single Central Record

The school will maintain secure personnel records and a Single Central Record in accordance with statutory requirements.

Records relating to successful candidates will include:

- Application form (including the names of the interview panel noted on the form).
- Interview notes - including explanation of any gaps in employment history.
- References.
- Proof of identity.
- Proof of the right to work in the UK.
- Proof of relevant academic qualifications.
- Evidence of medical clearance from the Occupational Health service.
- Evidence of DBS clearance, Barred List (where applicable) and Teacher Prohibition checks.
- Data from online checks
- Offer of employment letter and signed contract of employment.

The Single Central Record will be maintained and monitored in accordance with KCSIE requirements and will be subject to regular review and audit by appropriately trained personnel.

7. Safeguarding Culture

The school recognises that safer recruitment is only one aspect of safeguarding.

The school will promote a culture of vigilance, openness and accountability through:

- Effective recruitment practices.
- Comprehensive induction.
- Appropriate probation and supervision.
- Ongoing safeguarding training.
- Professional development.
- Clear reporting procedures.
- Effective management of concerns and allegations.

All staff are expected to act in accordance with safeguarding responsibilities and report concerns promptly in line with school procedures.

8. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body and Headteacher will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- Recruitment audits.
- Single Central Record monitoring.
- Safeguarding reviews.
- Staff feedback.
- Training records.
- Compliance monitoring.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if changes in legislation, statutory guidance or safeguarding practice require amendment.