Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedure

The Abbey School, Reading

Reviewed by:	Director of HR and Compliance	September 2025
Ratified by:	Whole School Leadership Committee and Governor Audit	September 2025
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1. Principles

Recruitment plays a pivotal role in the continued success and development of The Abbey School. It enables the School to attract, recruit and retain the best candidates and employees with the necessary skills and experience for their role.

The Abbey School is committed to ensuring that the recruitment and selection of its employees is conducted in a manner that is equitable, fair and transparent and promotes equality of opportunity.

The Abbey School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. Child protection and

safeguarding considerations are included at every stage of the recruitment process, consistent with the statutory guidance provided in the Keeping Children Safe in Education ('KCSIE'), September 2025, part 3 ('Safer Recruitment').

This policy applies to all recruitment across the whole school.

2. Aims

The aims of the School's recruitment policy are as follows:

- To ensure that the School meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.
- To ensure that staff are recruited based on their merits, abilities and suitability for the position. The School has an open recruitment process and will seek to recruit the best candidate for the role. The recruitment and selection process should ensure the identification of the person best suited to the role at the school based on the candidate's abilities, qualifications, attitude, experience and merit as measured against the job description.
- To ensure that the recruitment and selection of staff is conducted in a professional, timely and responsive manner and in compliance with current employment legislation and to ensure that all job candidates are considered equitably and consistently.
- To ensure compliance with all relevant recommendations and guidance including KCSIE 2025, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, and any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Employees involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with the provisions of this policy.

3. The Abbey Commitment Statement

The Abbey School is committed to promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The Abbey recognises that the effectiveness and safety of its Safer Recruitment Policy and procedures make a major contribution to child protection by helping to deter, reject or identify people who may be unsuitable for working with children.

Throughout the selection and recruitment procedure, the School will have regard to the guidance as set out in the aforementioned documents.

At induction and annually thereafter all staff as a minimum are required to read the safeguarding and child protection policy, the staff code of conduct including direction to the whistle-blowing policy, and Part 1/Annex A of KCSIE along with Annex B for those who work directly with children, and sign up to confirm their understanding of the values and systems outlined in these documents, as part of The Abbey Commitment Statement. The school is

committed to ensuring that no one will be appointed unless they fully support The Abbey Commitment Statement.

4. Safer Recruitment Training

At least one member of the interview panel will have successfully completed the Educare online training course of Safer Recruitment Training. This will be subject to renewal on a three-year basis.

5. Equality and Diversity

This policy aims to foster a culture of equality and recognises the benefits and value that greater diversity brings to the school.

The Abbey School wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities to everyone in protecting people from discrimination. In diversity, we recognise, respect and value differences in people. We actively oppose all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, age or disability.

We believe that it is in both the School's and the community's best interests to ensure that the human resources, talents and skills of all potential employees are considered when employment opportunities arise. This applies to all, including Governors, the Whole School Leadership Team, teachers, support staff, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, casual workers and agency staff.

Every possible step is taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly and adaptations are considered and made to promote a diverse workforce, to enable decisions on recruitment, selection, appointment and promotion to be based solely on objective and job-related criteria. This applies to the advertisement of roles, the recruitment and assessment process, appointment, training, conditions of work, pay and to every other aspect of employment. All terms and conditions of employment and related benefits shall be non-discriminatory, other than where there are legal, justifiable grounds for discriminating in the case of specific roles with particular requirements. Candidates for employment will be assessed according to their skills, experience and suitability for the role.

Where a recruitment agency is commissioned to assist in the recruitment to a vacant post, they will be expected to abide by the spirit of the School's equal opportunity policy and this policy, and may be asked to provide documentary evidence that they have done so.

If any candidate believes that the process has been unfair this will be investigated further by the Director of HR and Compliance.

6. Recruitment Planning

Time should be set aside for the preparation of supporting documentation and planning. Before commencing recruitment, it is important to consider whether there is a requirement for the role. It is recommended that a pre-interview planning meeting take place with the recruiting manager to confirm:

- Timelines, process and assessments
- Role requirements, experience/views/challenges and understanding of the position together with any safeguarding responsibilities
- The preparation of relevant questions, linking to the Job Description and Person Specification

To ensure equity and consistency of the process, interview questions will be agreed prior to interview. All candidates will be asked the same questions, which will include a question relating to safeguarding, and answers recorded and scored. It is noted that depending upon some responses supplemental questions may be required.

7. Job Descriptions & Person Specifications

Every role will have an up-to-date job description and person specification, which clearly defines the responsibilities and requirements. The job description will be reviewed with each vacancy to ensure that the contents are relevant and accurate. The job description will always include reference to the safeguarding requirements together with The Abbey School's values.

8. The Advert and Advertising

The advert will include the following statement:

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Applicants must undergo child protection screening, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

In addition the advert will also include:

- The school's commitment to equality and diversity and the value that greater diversity brings to the school community.
- The qualifications, skills, abilities, experience, attitude and behaviours required for the post;
- Safeguarding requirements and the extent to which the role will involve contact with children and regulated activity;
- The School's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and the safeguarding checks required;
- The safeguarding responsibilities of the post as per the Job Description and Person Specification;

- If the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – see DBS filtering guidance https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/filtering-rules-for-criminal-record-check-certificates.

All vacant posts will be advertised using relevant and appropriate media.

Internal vacancies will be advertised and a completed application form or expression of interest will be required. Internal candidates, who are selected for interview, will be interviewed against the agreed job description and criteria and inquiries of suitability for the role will be made with the Head of Department/Line Manager. Please also see the Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy.

9. Application Pack and Process

All candidates are required to complete the School's application form. CVs will only be accepted alongside a completed application form.

The application form/supporting recruitment information will include:

- a statement in the information provided to candidates that it is an offence to apply for the role if the candidate is barred from engaging in regulated activity with children
- a website link to the school's policy on employment of ex-offenders
- personal details, current and former names, current address and national insurance number
- details of candidate's present (or last) employment and reason for leaving
- full employment history (since leaving school, including education, employment and voluntary work), including reasons for any gaps in employment
- qualifications, the awarding body and date of award
- details of referees/references (see Reference Policy)
- a statement of the personal qualities and experience that the candidate believes are relevant to their suitability for the post advertised and how they meet the job description and person specification
- Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Application and recruitment process explanatory note
- Recruitment Privacy Notice

10. Longlisting and Shortlisting Candidates

Longlisting is required if a significant number of applications are received in the first instance. It involves an initial sift of applicants, eg incomplete sections, to reduce the number to a suitable and practical level for shortlisting.

At least two members of the interview panel should carry out the longlisting and shortlisting of candidates.

Applicants are scored against the essential and preferred requirements in the job description and person specification to select candidates for the interview process. The panel should consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment, reasons for the gaps and explore potential concerns.

Application forms need to be carefully checked to ensure:

- They are fully completed and consistent
- Identification of discrepancies and gaps in the candidate's employment history – these will be followed up at the interview and recorded on the Interview Assessment Form
- Qualifications and experience are relevant to the role

An online search will also be undertaken, prior to the interview, as part of the school's due diligence to identify any incidents or issues publicly available online, which the school may wish to explore further at interview. Candidates will be informed that this check takes place. Any results of the checks will be shared with the HR representative on the Panel or the Chair of the Panel.

11. Invitation to interview

All candidates invited for interview are required to bring the following documentation as proof of identity (photocopies are not acceptable):

- a current driving licence including a photograph or a current passport
- where applicable, proof of entitlement to work and reside in the UK
- full, original birth certificate
- where appropriate any documentation evidencing a change of name
- a utility bill or bank/credit card statement which must be no more than three months old, showing the full name and current home address.
- relevant educational (higher education and university) and qualification certificates

These will be retained securely and in accordance with GDPR legislation and destroyed immediately for unsuccessful candidates.

In addition, candidates are asked to complete the self-declaration form (sent out with the interview invitation) to provide information of any criminal record, any relevant prohibitions, being known to police and children's services, disqualification from childcare, relevant overseas information or information that could make them unsuitable to work with children.

12. Interview and Selection Process

The interview panel will ideally consist of three people representative of the school's community. One member of the panel will have completed Safer Recruitment Training and their details will be recorded on the Interview Assessment form.

The Interview and Assessment Day will incorporate a range of selection techniques to identify the most suitable person for the post. This will include a formal panel interview; a lesson observation (if appropriate); an assessment task and a tour of the school together with a pastoral discussion. Other selection methods will be used relevant to the role and the involvement of student panels is encouraged.

The formal interview panel will apply a series of questioning techniques and use open questions to further explore the candidates' suitability to work at The Abbey School and to work with children including, where appropriate, any discussion of information shared in their self declaration form. At interview candidates will be asked to provide examples of how they meet the requirements of the role.

Panel members will independently score the candidates (rate 1-5, with 5 being the highest score), discuss the outcome and agree on the most suitable candidate for the role. Reasons for non-appointment should be detailed and will be provided to the candidate.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel/HR representative to sign off the Interview Assessment forms and confirm that employment gaps and any other appropriate information was clarified at the point of interview. The candidate will also be asked to physically sign a hard copy of the application at interview.

All interview notes will be retained by the HR Team for six months, after which they will be destroyed.

13. Employment history and references

Where possible and with the candidate's agreement two references will be sought for all short-listed candidates prior to interview. This enables any concerns raised to be explored at interview. These will be retained by HR and provided to the Chair of the Panel prior to the interview.

The HR Team will contact the referee to verify the reference.

Referees will always be asked whether they are aware of any reason or have any concern that the applicant may not be suitable to work with children, in addition to further information appropriate to the role.

References will always be sought from the current employer and where appropriate from the relevant employer the last time the applicant worked with children. Two suitable references will be in place prior to the applicant starting work.

See the School's Reference Policy for further detailed information.

14. Offer of Employment

All offers of employment will be conditional upon satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks. An offer letter and contract of employment will be sent to the successful applicant.

15. Unsuccessful candidates

All candidates that attend for an interview will be informed by telephone of the outcome of the interview and feedback offered, where relevant.

Candidates who are unsuccessful at the shortlisting process will receive an automated email via the school's applicant tracking system.

16. Pre-employment Checks

The following checks will be undertaken prior to employment:

- **Proof of identity** - Verify a candidate's identity, preferably from current photographic ID and proof of address. Copies of relevant documents will be made and retained on the e-file.
- **DBS check** - Obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for those roles engaged in a regulated activity. Access https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance for more details.
- If using the DBS update service, sight of the original hard copy of the certificate is required to ensure that it is valid for employment with the children's workforce.
- The School undertakes to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the person seeking the position before making any decision to continue with the offer of employment – see information re self-declaration.
- **Barred List check** - Obtain a separate Barred List check if the candidate is to start work before the DBS certificate is available together with completion of a DBS risk assessment.
- **Prohibition Order** - Check that a candidate employed to undertake teaching work, whatever the nature of their role, is not subject to a Prohibition Order (or an interim Prohibition Order) issued by the Secretary of State, using the Teacher Services system.
- **Section 128 Provision** - Anyone engaged in management roles or promoted within the school to undertake a management position, will be subject to an additional check under Section 128 Provisions.
- **Medical Questionnaire** - Completion of a medical questionnaire to verify the candidate's ability to undertake the role. Subject to completion further advice may be sought by an independent occupational health advisor.
- **Right to Work** - Verify the candidate's right to work in the UK. Further advice is available on https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checks-employers-guide

- **References** - Obtain at least two references from prior employment, spanning at least the last five years, or if there is good reason for these being unavailable, from other appropriate sources following the guidance in KCSIE 2025.
- **Overseas check** - If the candidate has lived or worked overseas, appropriate checks must be carried out. These could include criminal record checks or letters from professional regulating authorities confirming that no sanction or restriction applies. From 1 July 2021, new rules have applied to all EU, EEA or Swiss Citizens. Right to work must be checked using the online checking service https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-right-to-work-eu-eea-and-swiss-citizens
- **Qualifications** - Verify professional qualifications, as appropriate. The Teaching Regulation Agency's (TRA) Employer Access Service should be used to verify any award of qualified teacher status (QTS) and the completion of induction or probation. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teacher-status-checks-information-for-employers
- **Childcare Disqualification Regulations 2018** - to ensure that candidates employed to work in nursery and reception classes or in wraparound care for children up to the age of eight years are not disqualified from working in the setting.

Also see the school's Single Central Register Guidance.

17. Overseas Recruitment

In addition to the checks listed above, if the candidate appointed is a national of a non-EEA country, a Certificate of Sponsorship may be required. This process may be complex and the timescales protracted. The HR Team will liaise with all such candidates. See also https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-right-to-work-eu-eea-and-swiss-citizens

18. Appointment Process

Upon appointment, the following documents are sent to the successful candidate:

- Conditional Offer letter
- Contract of employment

19. Onboarding

An Onboarding process will begin which requires the candidate to complete, in addition to the pre-employment checks, the following:

- New starter details form for payroll and employee checklist
- P46/P45
- Health questionnaire
- The Abbey School's Commitment Statement – KCSIE Part I/Annex A as appropriate, Annex B for those working directly with children, the safeguarding policy and code of conduct, including direction to the whistleblowing policy
- Completion of Safeguarding Training - Educare

- Completion of Prevent Duty Training - Educare
- Completion of Online Safety Training – Educare
- Digital guidance and staff AUP
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy

Staff will also be introduced to the Infobank containing all relevant policies. Temporary staff and volunteers may receive an adapted list of polices on a risk- and need-assessed basis.

20. Single Central Register

All employees, governors, volunteers, teaching trainees, agency and third-party worker details will be included in the Single Central Register. See the school's Single Central Register Guidance for further information.

21. DBS Checks

In accordance with KCSIE 2025, school positions (whether voluntary or paid) generally fall within the definition of 'Regulated Activity' requiring an Enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information. The school will require sight of the original Disclosure Certificate. In limited or unusual cases some positions may not be considered Regulated Activity and appropriate checks suitable to the role will be conducted in those circumstances.

The Disclosure Certificate may be obtained either by asking the candidate to apply for a new DBS Certificate or access to the DBS Update Service. Candidates who have registered with the DBS Update Service must produce their original DBS Certificate, along with the required proof of ID. In accordance with DBS guidance, the School will ask the candidate for permission to access their record on the Update Service. A printout of the result will be produced and held on the candidate's file.

Where there is a delay with the DBS, a member of the Business Leadership Team (BLT) may allow the new employee to start work, on the following conditions:

- The appointment is not confirmed
- The DBS application has been made in advance
- A Risk Assessment is completed and reviewed weekly until receipt of the DBS Certificate
- A separate Barred List check is made and kept with the Risk Assessment
- The employee is informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place

22. Agency and Third-Party Workers

Where workers from agencies or third-party providers (eg maintenance staff) are used, the agency or provider must give written notification that all vetting checks are undertaken in

accordance with KCSIE 2025 and the school's compliance requirements and meet the same standards as if employed directly by the school, including an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information for those engaged in regulated activity. The school will record the date of notification of the appropriate checks on the SCR and check the identity of the worker.

23. Trainees/Students

Where trainees are sponsored by an external body it is the responsibility of the provider to carry out the necessary checks and to provide written confirmation to the School that these have been completed and that the trainee is suitable to work with children.

24. Volunteers

Volunteers will complete a volunteer application form and provide proof of ID. For volunteers engaging in Regulated Activity, an Enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information will be required. Other volunteers will be supervised at all times when they are working on the school site and appropriate checks will be conducted in accordance with a risk assessment. Please see the school' Single Central Register Guidance for further information.

25. Contractors

Where contractors are used the school will clarify the relevant safeguarding requirements. For those roles in Regulated Activity this will include an enhanced DBS check including children's barred list information. For roles not in Regulated Activity but allowing regular contact with children, an enhanced DBS check (not including children's barred list information) will be required and any other specific checks as appropriate. Where there is no opportunity for regular contact with children the school will consider whether a basic DBS disclosure is required. Identity checks are always carried out on arrival.

26. Governors

An enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information for all Governors will be obtained prior to appointment. Where they have lived outside of the UK overseas checks will also be completed. In addition, identity, right to work and prohibition from management checks will be completed. Separate checks on the appointment of Charity Trustees are made and recorded by the Clerk to Governors.

27. DBS Renewals

DBS checks or Barred List checks do not require renewal for existing employees/volunteers unless concerns have been raised about their suitability to work with children and young people or unless employees move to new roles requiring additional checks.

28. DBS and TRA Referral

There is a legal requirement for employers to make a referral to the DBS where they believe an employee/worker/volunteer has engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child or young person; or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child or young person.

The school observes the requirement to report to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), within one month of leaving the School, any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used because they are considered unsuitable to work with children.

Where the school dismisses or ceases to use the services of a teacher because of serious misconduct, or might have dismissed them or ceased to use their services had they not left first, consideration will be given as to whether to refer the case to the Secretary of State via the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).

29. Other Related Policies and Information

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
- Reference Policy
- Single Central Register Guidance
- Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy