



SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY

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Responsible Officer:	Lynn Taylor Senior HR Officer

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1. Introduction

The safe recruitment of staff is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in education. Aspire Academies Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupils in its care and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

2. Scope and Objectives

The scope of this policy is to set out the Aspire Academies Trust minimum requirements of a recruitment process that aims to:

- attract the best possible applicants to vacancies on the basis of their merit, abilities and suitability
- deter prospective applicants who are unsuitable for work with children or young people
- identify and reject applicants who are unsuitable for work with children and young people

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

- to ensure that all applicants are considered equally and consistently
- to ensure that no applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds and specifically any protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010
- to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance including the statutory guidance published by the Department of Education (DFE) Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), The Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (the Prevent Duty Guidance) and any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS)
- to ensure that the Trust meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Trustees

- to ensure the schools have effective policies and procedures in place for the recruitment of staff and volunteers in accordance with the DFE guidance and legal requirements
- delegate responsibility to monitor compliance to the Executive Team and Academy Principals

3.2 CEO/COO/Executive Principals/Senior HR Officer/Principals

- to ensure the schools operate safe recruitment practices and makes sure appropriate checks are carried out on all staff, governors, trustees and volunteers
- to monitor contractors and agencies compliance with this document
- to promote the safeguarding of children and young people at every stage of the recruitment process

4. Recruitment and Selection Process

4.1 Recruitment Panels

In accordance with KCSIE, the schools and Trust must ensure that at least one member of any interview panel has undertaken 'Safer Recruitment' training and has kept this training up to date.

The interview panel will vary in number depending on the recruitment scenario, typically the panel would consist of at least 2 members, however this number may increase the more senior the role.

Recruitment of the CEO is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees with support from the Senior HR Officer. A member of the Board of Trustees will be invited to interview for Principal, Executive Principal, CEO and senior roles within the Central Services Team.

At least one member of the interview panel will have been involved with the shortlisting process.

4.2 Adverts and Recruitment Packs

Advertisements for posts, whether in newspapers, journals or online, will include the statement:

“Aspire Academies Trust is committed to safeguarding children and young people. All post holders are subject to a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check”.

Prospective applicants will be supplied, as a minimum, with the following:

- job description and person specification
- the Trust’s child protection policy
- the Trust’s safer recruitment policy (this document)
- the selection procedure for the post.

4.3 Application forms

All prospective applicants must fully complete an Aspire Academies Trust application form via the My New Term portal. CVs will not be accepted in isolation.

The Trust promotes the practice of using anonymised application forms to manage unconscious bias.

4.4 Shortlisting

The shortlisting process will be undertaken by appropriate staff within the establishment who are likely to be in a line manager role or a more senior position. At least one person involved with shortlisting will be on the interview panel.

If shortlisted, candidates will be asked to complete a criminal record self-declaration form where they will be required to declare all unspent cautions and convictions, and also, any adult cautions (simple or conditional), and spent convictions that are not protected as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2020). The relevant declaration form is part of the My New Term application process and will be issued to shortlisted candidates automatically.

Shortlisted candidates will also be sent:

- childcare disqualification declaration form (where applicable)
- full details of the selection process

4.5 Employment History and References

A minimum of two references will be taken up and at least one of the references will be obtained from the candidate’s current or most recent employer and will be sought directly from the referee.

The school will explore any discrepancy or gaps in employment identified through references during the interview where possible or, at least, before any offer of employment. This includes references for internal candidates.

If a candidate is moving from another school the reference must be from the Headteacher/Principal or another senior colleague (in the absence of a HT) and not from a colleague. For senior executive roles such as Executive Leader and/or CEO the reference must be from the CEO or Executive Leadership Team of the Academy.

Open references or testimonials provided by the candidate will not be accepted.

Where necessary, referees will be contacted by telephone or email in order to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies and verify the source of the reference. This contact will then be recorded on the school's Single Central Record for successful candidates.

Where necessary, previous employers who have not been named as referees will be contacted in order to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies. A detailed written note will be kept of such exchanges.

Referees will always be asked specific questions about:

- the candidate's suitability for working with children and young people
- any disciplinary warnings, including time-expired warnings, that relate to the safeguarding of children;
- The candidate's suitability for this post.

Applicants are not automatically entitled to see their employment references.

4.6 Online Searches

The Trust's policy is to conduct online searches as part of their due diligence on shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school might want to explore with the applicant at interview.

The Trust is aware of its responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and the risk that such a search may increase the potential for discrimination or feed into unconscious bias. Schools follow the guidance below when carrying out online searches:

- Searches must take place after shortlisting so it cannot be part of the decision to invite to interview
- Candidates must be made aware of this search at the point of being invited to interview (this is done via the My New Term Portal)
- The search must be based upon an agreed set of criteria (see Appendix 2)
- Concentrate on professional information that sits within the public domain, and applied consistently for all candidates
- The parameters of the search to be agreed in advance and applied consistently for all candidates (which platforms, search criteria and dates)
- The searches must be carried out by the same person. Where possible by someone who will not be involved in the subsequent interviews/decision making
- The completed form must be shared with the interview panel as soon as possible in order for any concerns raised to be properly incorporated into the interview questions, giving the candidate an opportunity to respond

Wherever practicable searches will be undertaken using employer devices and accounts.

4.7 Selection

Selection techniques will be determined by the nature and duties of the vacant post and may include a variety of methods. The school will conduct interviews in a face to face manner (which could be via remote methods using video conferencing software, such as Microsoft Teams or similar, if face to face is not practical). Telephone interviews may be used at the short-listing stage.

During the interview process candidates will be required to:

- give a satisfactory explanation of any gaps in employment
- provide a satisfactory explanation of any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to recruiters
- declare any information that is likely to appear on a DBS check (via the criminal self-declaration form)
- provide a childcare disqualification form if and when required
- demonstrate their capacity to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people and explore their motivation for wanting to work with children
- demonstrate how they meet the job description and person specification

All applicants who are invited to interview will be asked to bring original evidence of their identity, address, right to work in the UK, relevant qualifications. They will also be expected to have completed the Criminal Convictions Self-Declaration form on the My New Term portal.

5. Pre-Employment Checks

Any offer of employment made to a successful candidate, including anyone who has lived or worked abroad, **must** be conditional on the satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks and the school will:

- verify a candidate's identity, it is important to be sure that the person is who they claim to be, this includes being aware of the potential for individuals changing their name. Best practice is checking the name on their birth certificate, where this is available.
- obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced Children's Workforce DBS certificate including barred list information for those who will be working in regulated activity and an Enhanced Children's Workforce DBS (without the barred list check) for anyone who is working in the school but is not working in regulated activity (see Appendix 1)
- obtain a separate barred list check if an individual will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available. The school will also carry out a risk assessment if candidates will be starting work prior to a DBS certificate being available, this risk assessment must be signed by the CEO on completion
- separate barred list checks must only be carried out in the following circumstances:
 - for newly appointed staff who are engaging in regulated activity, pending the receipt of an Enhanced Certificate with Barred List information from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (and where all other relevant checks have been carried out), or,
 - where an individual has worked in a school or college that brought them into regular contact with children or young persons which ended not more than three months prior to that person's appointment to the organisation (and where all other relevant checks have been carried out)

- verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. A job applicant can be asked relevant questions about disability and health in order to establish that they have the physical and mental capacity for the specific role
- verify the candidate's right to work in the UK. Advice on this can be found on the Gov.uk website.
- Since 1 July 2021 candidates from an EEA Country, will be required to provide evidence of having obtained settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- Since January 2021, any overseas external candidates must apply for a VISA via the [New Points Based Immigration Scheme](#).
- if the candidate has lived or worked outside the UK within the last 5 years, make any further checks the school feel appropriate which would include an overseas police check. Where a police check is not available a risk assessment must be put in place.
- verify professional qualifications as appropriate by viewing original certificates. The Teacher Services system should be used to verify any award of qualified teacher status (QTS) and the completion of teacher induction or probation
- ensure the candidate is checked against the prohibition from teaching orders
- ensure the candidate is checked against the prohibition from management roles (section 128) check where applicable (part of barred list check for those in regulated activity).
- ensure the candidate completes a childcare disqualification declaration (where appropriate).

5.1 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and ongoing suitability

As part of our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, the school requires all staff engaged in regulated activity to hold an enhanced DBS check, including barred list information where applicable.

5.1.1 Initial Checks

- All new employees, governors, and volunteers who will have unsupervised access to children are required to obtain a satisfactory enhanced DBS check before commencing work.
- DBS certificates must be at the appropriate level for the role and workforce (child workforce, adult workforce, or both).

5.1.2 Renewal and Ongoing Checks

- Routine renewal of DBS checks for existing staff is not required. However, a new DBS check will be undertaken if:
 - a member of staff undertakes a significant change in role or responsibilities (e.g. moving from a non-pupil-facing role to one involving direct or unsupervised contact with children, or where
 - the new role is defined as regulated activity);
 - there is a break in service of more than three months;
 - safeguarding or suitability concerns are raised about the individual;
 - the existing DBS certificate is not at the correct level for the new role; or
 - the certificate is more than three months old upon appointment and the individual is not registered with the DBS Update Service.

- The school reserves the right, as part of its safer recruitment practice, to carry out periodic re-checks for long-standing staff, even where none of the above apply, in order to maintain high standards of safeguarding.

5.1.3 Ongoing Suitability

- All staff have a duty to inform the school immediately of any change in their circumstances that may affect their suitability to work with children. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - being subject to arrest, caution, or conviction;
 - being the subject of safeguarding concerns;
 - living in a household where a safeguarding or criminal matter may reasonably raise concerns about suitability.
- Return-to-work meetings following long-term absence (e.g. sickness or maternity leave) will include a reminder of this duty and an opportunity for staff to declare any relevant changes in circumstances.

5.2 Secretary of State Prohibition Orders and Section 128 direction (teaching and management roles)

In all cases, where an applicant is to undertake a teaching role of any kind (this may include non-teaching staff if they plan, prepare and deliver lessons and assess and report on pupils without supervision of a qualified teacher) a Prohibition Order check will be made. It is anticipated that this will be performed at the shortlisting stage but will in any case be carried out before any offer of employment is made.

The above activities do not amount to “teaching work” if they are supervised by a qualified teacher. If in any doubt or if the candidate has taught previously, or may teach in the future, the check will be undertaken.

Prohibition orders prevent a person from carrying out teaching work in schools, sixth form colleges, 16 to 19 academies, relevant youth accommodation and children's homes in England. A person who is prohibited from teaching must not be appointed to work as a teacher in such a setting.

Prohibition orders are made by the Secretary of State following consideration by a professional conduct panel convened by the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA). Pending such consideration, the Secretary of State may issue an interim prohibition order if it is considered to be in the public interest to do so.

A section 128 direction prohibits or restricts a person from taking part in the management of an independent school, including academies and free schools. An individual who is subject to a section 128 direction is unable to:

- take up a management position in an independent school, academy or free school as an employee
- be a trustee of an academy or free school trust; a governor or member of a proprietor body for an independent school
- be a governor on any governing body in an independent school, academy or free school that retains or has been delegated any management responsibilities.

- A person prohibited under section 128 is also disqualified from holding or continuing to hold office as a governor of a school as stated in Keeping Children Safe in Education and the DFE Governance Handbook.

The Trust will use the TRA's Employer Access service to make prohibition, direction, restriction, and children's barred list checks.

Where the candidate will be engaging in regulated activity, a DBS barred list check will also identify any section 128 directions.

With effect from 1 January 2021, TRA checks cover UK Citizens only and schools will therefore need to arrange for these checks to be carried out in the relevant country for overseas applicants (including those from the EEA).

5.3 Proof of identity, Right to Work in the UK & Verification of Qualifications and/or professional status and Criminal Records Self Declaration Form

All shortlisted candidates invited to attend an interview will be required to bring their identification documentation such as passport, birth certificate, driving licence etc. with them as proof of identity/eligibility to work in the UK, in accordance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and DBS Code of Practice Regulations (including evidence of settled status as required) and to complete the Criminal Records Self Declaration form on My New Term portal.

Good quality photocopies of all documents will be taken. These will then be signed and dated by the person who has evidenced the originals and the copy should state this;

"Originals seen and identity confirmed"

- Successful Candidates: all documents will be stored securely on the employee file for audit and inspection purposes, including any relevant risk assessments.
- Unsuccessful Candidates: all documents will be kept securely for no later than 6 months after the recruitment process has been concluded. After which they will be destroyed securely.

Please note that the legislation surrounding what information is disclosed in an Enhanced and Standard DBS certificate changed on 28 November 2020 and as a result, an employer may not receive full details of a candidate's criminal history due to the changes to filtering.

An additional change was made on 28th October 2023:

- All unspent conditional cautions and convictions (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) will be automatically disclosed.

This change ensures that all records that are disclosed on a DBS Basic check will now also appear on Standard and Enhanced checks. However, in accordance with safeguarding, an employer is still legally entitled to ask shortlisted candidates to disclose their criminal history, however this no longer includes final warnings, cautions and reprimands. Further guidance on this can be found in the NACRO guidance.

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

5.4 Fitness to undertake the role

A confidential pre-employment health questionnaire must be completed to verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. A successful candidate can be asked relevant questions about disability and health in order to establish whether they have the physical and mental capacity for the specific role **once an offer of employment has been made**. Confidential pre-employment checks will be carried out by the Trust's Occupational Health provider.

5.5 Individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK

Candidates who have lived or worked outside the UK within the last 5 years must undergo the same checks as all other staff in the school. In addition, the school must make any further checks they think appropriate so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered.

The Home Office guidance on criminal records checks for overseas applicants can be found [here](#).

Further guidance on checks for overseas workers can be found on the gov.uk website.

Following the UK's exit from the EU, schools should apply the same approach for any individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK within the past 5 years regardless of whether or not it was in an EEA country or the rest of the world.

These checks could include, where available:

- Criminal record checks for overseas applicants – Home Office guidance can be found on Gov.uk;
- And for teaching positions obtaining a letter (via the applicant) from the professional regulating authority in the country (or countries) in which the applicant has worked confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions, and or that they are aware of any reason why they may be unsuitable to teach

Where available, such evidence can be considered together with information obtained through other pre-appointment checks to help assess their suitability.

Where this information is not available schools should seek alternative methods of checking suitability and or undertake a risk assessment that supports informed decision making on whether to proceed with the appointment.

Although sanctions and restrictions imposed by another regulating authority do not prevent a person from taking up teaching positions in England, schools should consider the circumstances that led to the restriction or sanction being imposed when considering a candidate's suitability for employment. Further information can be found in DfE Guidance.

Not all countries provide criminal record information, and where they do, the nature and detail of the information provided varies from country to country. Schools should also be aware that the criteria for disclosing offences in other countries often have a different threshold than those in the UK. The Home Office provides guidance on criminal records checks for overseas applicants.

Some overseas qualified teachers can apply to the TRA for the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) in England. More information about this is available at the following link [Qualified teacher status \(QTS\): qualify to teach in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Please note that holding a teaching qualification (wherever it was obtained) does not provide suitable assurances for safeguarding

purposes that an individual has not been found guilty of any wrongdoing or misconduct, and or is suitable to work with children.

5.6 Childcare Disqualification Declaration

Where relevant (as detailed below) applicants must complete a Childcare Disqualification form provided by the school in relation to the Childcare Disqualification Regulations 2018. This is to cover circumstances where the individual has a conviction that may result in them being barred from working with children. Where a positive declaration is made a waiver can be applied for from Ofsted, and must be satisfactorily granted, before the applicant may commence work.

This **only** applies to staff working in the following settings:

- Early Years Provision - staff who provide any care for a child up to and including reception age. This includes education in nursery and reception classes and/or any supervised activity (such as breakfast clubs, lunchtime supervision and after school care provided by the school) both during and outside of school hours for children in the early years age range; and
- Later years provision (for children under 8) - staff who are employed to work in childcare provided by the school outside of school hours for children who are above reception age but who have not attained the age of 8. This does not include education or supervised activity for children above reception age during school hours (including extended school hours for co-curricular learning activities, such as the school's choir or sports teams) but it does include before school settings, such as breakfast clubs, and after school provision.

5.7 Retention of Documents

Where documents have been obtained to verify a successful candidate's identity, right to work and required qualifications, these will be kept on their personnel file.

DBS certificates and records of criminal information disclosed by the candidate are covered by GDPR regulations. Copies of this information will only be retained where there is a valid reason for doing so and will not be kept for longer than six months. After destruction, the school may record the fact the vetting was carried out, the result and the recruitment decision.

Personnel records will be retained for a period of six years following the end of an individual's employment.

6. Single Central Record

Each school in the Trust will keep a single central record (SCR) of pre-employment checks, which includes the statutory requirement to see the original DBS certificate and record the date seen. In the KCSIE Regulations this is referred to as the "register". The single central record will cover the following people:

- All staff (including teacher trainees on salaried routes, agency and third party supply staff who work at the school)
- For independent schools, all members of the proprietor body
- For Academy Trusts, the Members, Governors and Trustees
- Confirmation that these checks have been carried out along with the date the check was undertaken/obtained must be logged on this record for all employees of the Trust

7. Induction

The Trust recognises that safer recruitment and selection is not just about the start of employment, but must be part of a larger policy framework and ongoing vigilance for all staff. The Trust will therefore provide ongoing training and support for all staff.

All staff who are new to the Trust will receive induction training that will include the Trust's safeguarding policies and guidance on safe working practices including Child Protection, PREVENT, FGM awareness and online safety.

Regular meetings will be held during the first 6 months of employment between the new employee(s) and the appropriate manager(s).

8. Contractors and Agency Workers

The school will obtain written notification from any agency, or third-party organisation they use that the organisation has carried out the checks (in respect of the enhanced DBS certificate, written notification that confirms the certificate has been obtained by either the employment business or another such business), on an individual who will be working at the school.

Where the position requires a barred list check, this will be obtained by the agency or third party prior to appointing the individual. The school will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

9. Volunteers

Under no circumstances will a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Volunteers who, on an unsupervised basis, teach or look after children regularly, or provide personal care on a one-off basis in the school, will be in regulated activity. The school will obtain an enhanced DBS certificate (which should include barred list information) for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity. Existing volunteers in regulated activity do not have to be re-checked if they have already had a DBS check (which includes barred list information). However, the Trust may conduct a repeat DBS check (which should include barred list information) on any such volunteer should they have concerns.

There are certain circumstances where the school may obtain an enhanced DBS certificate (not including barred list information), for volunteers who are not engaging in regulated activity. This is set out in DBS workforce guides, which can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Employers are not legally permitted to request barred list information on a supervised volunteer as they are not considered to be engaged in regulated activity.

The school will undertake a risk assessment and use their professional judgement and experience when deciding whether to obtain an enhanced DBS certificate for any volunteer not engaging in regulated activity. In doing so they should consider:

- the nature of the work with children
- what the establishment knows about the volunteer, including formal or informal information offered by staff, parents and other volunteers
- whether the volunteer has other employment or undertakes voluntary activities where referees can advise on suitability

- whether the role is eligible for an enhanced DBS check.

Details of the risk assessment should be recorded.

It is for the school to determine whether a volunteer is supervised. In making this decision, and where an individual is supervised, to help determine the appropriate level of supervision the school must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This guidance requires that, for a person to be considered supervised, the supervision must be:

- by a person who is in regulated activity
- regular and day to day; and
- “Reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure the protection of children.”

The DBS cannot provide barred list information on any person, including volunteers, who are not in, or seeking to engage in regulated activity.

10. Trustees and Local Advisory Members (Local Governors)

Trustees and School Local Advisory Body members are required to have an enhanced criminal records certificate from the DBS. It is the responsibility of the school to apply for the certificate for any of their LAB members that do not already have one. Governance is not a regulated activity and so LAB members do not need a barred list check unless, in addition to their governance duties, they also engage in regulated activity.

APPENDIX 1 – Regulated Activity

Regulated activity includes:

- a) Teaching, training, instructing, caring for (see (c) below) or supervising children if the person is unsupervised, or providing advice or guidance on physical, emotional or educational well-being, or driving a vehicle only for children;
- b) Work for a limited range of establishments (known as ‘specified places’, which include schools and colleges), with the opportunity for contact with children, but not including work done by supervised volunteers.

Work under (a) or (b) is regulated activity only if done regularly. Some activities are always regulated activities, regardless of frequency or whether they are supervised or not. This includes:

- c) Relevant personal care, or health care provided by or provided under the supervision of a health care professional:
 - personal care includes helping a child with eating and drinking for reasons of illness or disability or in connection with toileting, washing, bathing and dressing for reasons of age, illness or disability
 - health care means care for children provided by, or under the direction or supervision of, a regulated health care professional

APPENDIX 2 – Online search record (sample)

Online search record

How to use this form

- Fill in the 'search parameters' column. Adapt the example parameters to your needs
- Once you've adapted the form to suit your needs, make a separate copy for each candidate and give these to the staff member who will carry out the searches. They should not be involved in carrying out interviews or making recruitment decisions
- Have the staff member carry out the searches as directed by the search parameters
- Ask them to return the forms back to you before you conduct interviews. Raise any concerns with the candidates

Candidate name:	
Role shortlisted for:	
Searcher name:	
Date and time of online search:	
SEARCH PARAMETERS	CONCERNS RAISED
Google search: The following terms, looking at the first page of results: • 'candidates name' • 'candidate's name' + 'current/previous school/employer' • 'candidates name' + 'education institution' • 'candidate's name' + 'address' Websites: The candidate's name was typed into the search function of the following websites: • LinkedIn • Twitter (checked the top 10 results) • Facebook (checked the top 10 results)	Only record information that suggests the candidate: • Is unqualified for the role • Poses a potential safeguarding risk • Risks damaging the reputation of your school/trust Don't include any irrelevant personal information.