SCHOOLS HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM

GUIDANCE FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF SCHOOL STAFF (REVISED SEPTEMBER 2026)

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1. Preamble

Effective recruitment and selection requires time, careful preparation and skill. This guidance document, including the appendices, covers the processes involved in all aspects of the recruitment and selection process for all school staff.

The quality of service delivery and effective teamwork all depend on the successful recruitment and selection of the right staff. Mistakes in selection are always difficult and costly to correct. It is therefore vital that each stage of the recruitment and selection process is completed carefully and professionally. These recruitment and selection guidelines outline an attainable standard of good practice. The advice given is designed to reflect the needs of schools, good human resources practice and legal requirements.

Guidance for Safer Working Practice

Schools need to be vigilant in the recruitment and selection of their staff. Abusers will target such organisations and be extremely adept at presenting themselves as caring and trustworthy individuals. Indicators of abusive behaviour can emerge through inappropriate attitudes or inconsistent reactions. A vigorous recruitment and selection process provides important opportunities to deter and prevent offenders from gaining access to children and young people through their work.

Schools can reduce the risk of employing adults who pose, or may pose a risk to children and young people by being vigilant in their employment practices and by adopting a structured and systematic approach to recruitment and selection for all staff, including volunteers.

The material contained in these guidelines supports the DfE guidance in Part 3 of **'Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)'**

All staff involved in recruitment or selection should receive adequate instructions and guidance. Selection panels must be constituted with at least one member of the panel who has completed appropriate Safer Recruitment training.

Artificial intelligence and the recruitment and selection process

While AI recruitment can offer efficiency and cost-effectiveness, it also presents significant disadvantages, including bias and lack of human interaction.

Bias and discrimination – If the data used to train AI algorithms is biased, the AI may favour certain demographics over others, leading to discrimination. This can undermine diversity and inclusion efforts within organisations.

Lack of Human Interaction – AI tools often lack the personal touch that human recruiters provide. While AI can efficiently screen applications and match key words, it will struggle to assess candidates' soft skills and interpersonal qualities. This could result in hiring decisions that do not align with the actual needs of the school..

Lack of transparency – AI algorithms can be complex and difficult to interpret, making it challenging for recruiters and candidates to understand how decisions have been made. This lack of transparency can erode trust in the recruitment process, candidates may feel that they have been evaluated unfairly, and the recruitment panel may struggle to justify their decisions in the event that a recruitment complaint is received.

For these reasons the use of AI is not commended for use in schools as part of their recruitment and selection processes.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION CHECKLIST

		Initials	Date
Pre-interview	**Planning** • Recruitment timetable agreed with panel – one member of panel to be appropriately trained • Job description and person specification to be reviewed/agreed and provided to applicants • Other candidate pack documentation to be reviewed and updated as necessary • Ensure application form seeks all relevant information and includes relevant statements about references and a declaration for the applicant to sign to confirm that the correct information has been provided		
	Advertisement • Ensure advertisement includes reference to the School's Safeguarding Policy and the School's commitment to safeguarding • Ensure advertisement includes reference for the need for the successful applicant to undergo an enhanced DBS check		
	Shortlisting • Applications scrutinised – any discrepancies/gaps/anomalies noted to explore with candidate if shortlisted • Shortlist of candidates prepared by each panel member in advance of the shortlisting meeting • Areas to explore with shortlisted candidates at interview to be noted • Agreed shortlist to be drawn up at the end of the shortlisting meeting		
	References - seeking • Use standard proforma where appropriate, including reason for leaving and any previous substantiated safeguarding issues/disciplinary action • To be sought directly from named referees on shortlisted candidates in advance of the interviews • In all cases, a reference must be sought and obtained from the employer for whom the candidate most recently worked with children or vulnerable adults, if the candidate has such experience • Reference requests must be addressed to the Head of the establishment • A reference should be sought from the current/most recent employer.		
	References - receipt • To be scrutinised and checked against the information provided on the application form to ensure consistency (e.g. employment dates, job title etc); • Ensure referee has appropriate authority (if a referee is in a school the reference should be written/confirmed by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors) • Verify electronic references with the person who provided the reference (e.g. if in doubt about the email address that it has been sent from) • Any discrepancy/area of concern to be noted and taken up with the applicant (either at interview or in advance of interview) and/or directly with the referee; • Insufficiently detailed references may result in the application being removed from the selection process after first bringing this to the attention of the candidate and referee.		

	Online searches/Criminal record self-disclosure • KCSIE (2026) "Schools should consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on shortlisted candidates" – undertaken by someone other than a member of the panel • Candidate to be told the online check will be conducted if shortlisted • Criminal record/suitability self-disclosure to be sent to shortlisted candidates and returned prior to interview date		
		Initials	**Date**
	Interviews • Ensure the invite to interview letter includes all relevant information and instructions; • Ensure there are at least two members on the interview panel and that they have the authority to appoint; • Ensure the panel has met to agree questions to be asked (including safeguarding/suitability questions) in advance of the interview date, including areas to explore with each candidate based on their application form, references, criminal record/suitability self-disclosure, online search etc; • Interview to explore applicant's suitability to work with children in addition to suitability with regard to requirements of role • Ensure that the identity and qualifications of the successful applicant are verified on the day of interview by scrutiny of appropriate original documentation, copies of documents to be taken and placed on file. • Where necessary, applicant to physically sign their application form		
	Conditional offer of appointment • Ensure any offer made is conditional upon satisfactory completion of the following checks: ➢ References; ➢ Identity (if not verified on the interview date); ➢ Qualifications (if not verified on the interview date); ➢ Right to work in the UK; ➢ DBS check; ➢ Barred List check (if employed in regulated activity); ➢ Further checks if the individual has lived or worked outside of the UK; ➢ Medical clearance; ➢ QTS (for teaching posts only); ➢ Prohibition list (for teaching posts or HLTAs undertaking teaching work only (i.e. not under direct supervision of teacher)); ➢ Childcare disqualification regulations check (if appropriate); ➢ Statutory induction (for new Early Career Teachers); ➢ Probationary period (for non-teaching staff)		
	Appointment & probationary period – to include: • Appropriate level of safeguarding and child protection training; • Name/contact details for Designated Safeguarding Lead; • Online safety and acceptable use agreement; • Whistleblowing Policy; • Pupil Behaviour Policy; • Guidance for Safer Working Practice • Code of Conduct; • Social Media Policy; • Health & Safety/Emergency evacuation procedures; • Details of how induction will be managed (i.e. via probation period with regular reviews for support staff or statutory induction for ECTs)		

2. Introduction

This guidance should be used in a common-sense manner in order to appoint the most suitable applicant for the vacancy.

This guidance should be used for recruitment, selection and interviewing for all school posts. However, whilst its basic principles still apply, this guidance does not specifically cover the appointment to Headteacher and Deputy/Assistant Headteacher posts. Separate guidance for these positions is available via your School Adviser.

The guidance should be applied to all full and part-time appointments although on occasion, temporary posts or posts for volunteers may be filled via varying procedures, providing that the alternative arrangements themselves are in accordance with equal opportunities legislation, and the principles of good human resources and equal opportunities practice are applied in such procedures.

If schools take a decision not to follow the guidance contained within this document, any alternative procedures followed must achieve the same objectives and not conflict with good practice or legislative requirements.

Lancashire County Council as an equal opportunity employer intends that no job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment because of their age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, sex, sexual orientation, race, or religion or belief, unless this can be objectively justified.

The above approach is commended to the Governing Boards of fully delegated schools and all persons making appointments should endeavour to conduct the recruitment process on an objective basis dealing only with the applicant's suitability for the job and ability to fulfil the job requirements.

In voluntary aided church schools, those involved in recruitment and selection may also wish to refer to the Equal Opportunity Policy of the relevant Church Authority.

The Equality Act came into force in October 2010. It harmonised and replaced existing discrimination legislation, including the Race Relations Act (1976), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). The Equality Act covers the same groups that were protected by existing equality legislation – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. These are now called ‘protected characteristics’, making discrimination on these grounds illegal in respect of recruitment and selection.

Appendix O contains a brief reference to the main legal considerations relating to Recruitment and Selection.

There is a separate policy in relation to trans people which includes additional advice in relation to the recruitment process and personnel records. This can be found on the Schools Portal here

3. Safeguarding children and young people – safer recruitment

Safe environments do not happen by accident. They are purposefully built and carefully maintained. Safe recruitment and selection processes are essential if schools and other educational establishments are to attract the best staff and deter or reject those who may pose a risk to children or who are unsuited to work with them.

In following DfE guidance and using the information and templates provided in this pack, schools and other educational establishment can be confident that they are working towards the standards outlined below.

- *The school's management team is vigilant in ensuring that all recruitment and selection systems, processes and procedures are examined from a staff/child protection focus.*

- *The school makes explicit its commitment to the provision and maintenance of a safe and supportive environment for all pupils, staff and others within the school community.*

- *All applicants, short-listed candidates, contractors and service providers are advised about and understand the necessity of robust recruitment and selection practices that safeguard and support pupils and adults within the school.*

- *The school is clear about personal and professional boundaries, provides clarity about what is proper behaviour, and has managers who are vigilant in pursuing inappropriate, unprofessional or abusive behaviour. In this regard, attention is drawn to the document 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with Children and Young People in Education Settings.' (February 2022).*

- *The school's child protection strategies include disciplinary procedures which deal effectively with those adults who fail to comply with school policies.*

- *Schools paying for or using services satisfy themselves that those services have in place appropriate and effective arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children.*

Schools should widely publicise their commitment to building and maintaining a safe environment which safeguards and promotes the welfare of children and staff by the use of a general statement similar to the following:

"This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment."

This statement should be included in:-

- All publicity and information sites
- Advertisements
- Information packs for applicants
- Job descriptions and person specifications
- Letters of appointment
- Induction Training
- Competency Frameworks

Where a school elects not to adopt these Recruitment and Selection guidelines, the Governing Board must ensure that a similar policy is in place which works to the principles and standards outlined in the DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' document (September 2026), and that the application and effectiveness of such a policy is reviewed by the Governing Board on a regular basis.

4. Power of Appointment

The appointment of school staff in community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided and Foundation schools is governed by the provisions of the Education Act 2002.

The governing board has overall responsibility for all staff appointments in its school. With the exception of the appointment of headteachers and deputy/assistant headteachers, it may delegate this responsibility to the headteacher, an individual governor, or a group of governors with or without the headteacher.

The governing board (or headteacher where the responsibility for appointments outside the leadership group has been delegated by the governing board) should determine through their formal processes who will be involved in the selection process and what delegation arrangements shall apply in respect of the various categories of post. Governing boards should ensure that the selection panel that is convened is proportionate to the post on offer. It is recommended that all selection panels contain at least two members and that the panel remains consistent throughout the selection process.

The governing board of a voluntary aided church school should refer to any guidance issued by the relevant church authority concerning the delegation of responsibility for staff appointments.

Guidance on headteacher and governing board responsibilities in recruitment and selection can be found in Appendix N

5. Confidentiality

For a selection process to be successful it is essential that appropriate levels of confidentiality are maintained throughout the process.

Candidates need to be certain that their applications are being considered within strict limits of confidentiality, that their interview performance will be discussed confidentially and documentation relating to the process will be stored in a confidential place.

In practice this means that all discussions relating to applicants at shortlisting and interviewing stages must remain confidential. Views expressed in such discussions should not be communicated beyond those participating in the appointment process, unless exceptional circumstances apply, or there is the requirement to discuss the process under an alternative procedure or in an Employment Tribunal.

6. Recruitment and Selection – initial stages

6.1 Vacancy Occurs

A vacancy may occur as a result of the resignation, promotion or retirement of an existing member of staff or from the identification of funding for an additional post.

When a post becomes vacant the opportunity should be taken to assess clearly the need for the post to be filled having regard to workload and future anticipated need. The details of the post may need to be amended; therefore discussion with the out-going post holder and the line manager for the post may be necessary.

In respect of any vacancy or new post an outline of the main duties, responsibilities and organisational setting for the post shall be prepared and drawn up in the form of a job description (see 7 below). The knowledge, skills or abilities required must be separately identified in a person specification (see 8 below).

Is the post absolutely necessary?

No recently vacated post should ever be considered as automatically needing to be filled. A well managed school will be engaged in a process of ongoing review and workforce planning. Therefore, a vacancy ought to act as a catalyst for a careful examination of the school's needs in relation to the School Development Plan.

The Headteacher should review the job and consider the following:

- Is the post still required? Has the situation changed? Is there a need to re-focus support or finance?
- If it is still required, is it still required at the same level? (Are you getting what you need from this post? Is it pitched at the right level? Do you need to address a grading issue?)
- Should there be any changes to the hours or contract, bearing in mind current and future needs?

This should include a review of:

- the current situation;
- probable/intended future developments;
- the strengths of current staff;
- gaps in curriculum/age range expertise;
- the aspirations of the remaining staff for a personal change of role or change to their current working arrangements (e.g. staff wishing to increase or reduce their hours, or work on a job share basis).

The needs of the school will be best identified by wide discussion and consultation involving:

- Chair of Governors/Governing Board;
- the whole staff;
- the Deputy Head/Senior Management;
- the School Adviser/School Improvement Partner/a Human Resources Manager

Cases of potential overstaffing – either future or current

Vacant posts should be examined in the context of planned management of staffing over a period of time, particularly when the budget of the school is likely to decrease over time due to falling rolls. For example, in cases of potential overstaffing elsewhere in the school, consideration should be given to the possibility of internal transfers, with appropriate training if necessary.

6.2 Exit Interviews/Job Analysis

As an aid to compiling the job description and person specification an Exit Interview can be a useful first stage. An Exit Interview is an interview with the previous postholder prior to him/her leaving the employment of the school or transferring to another post. The purpose of this is to give the experienced job holder the opportunity to comment on the role and suggest ways it could be amended to ensure it is structured effectively. It will also help to provide a realistic assessment of the weighting of the various tasks involved in the job. Some example exit interview questions can be found at Appendix Y,

6.3 Internal appointments/promotions procedure

All staff should be given the opportunity to apply for the vacancy. Part time staff must not be denied the opportunity to apply for a full-time vacancy and, unless it is clearly stated that a particular vacancy is not suitable for job sharing, applications to job share should be accepted and given due consideration.

The Headteacher/Teacher-in-Charge must notify staff of the vacancy and in the case of teaching staff, the purpose for which any TLRs are to be allocated and the intended operative date. Staff interested in applying for the vacancy should also be notified of the closing date for applications.

Displaying the advert on school notice boards and/or notification in internal bulletins will normally be sufficient for these purposes but special arrangements may be necessary to notify staff on long term absence from the school due to maternity leave, illness, unpaid leave or secondment.

After the notified closing date the Headteacher should make arrangements for the appointment through an open and fair selection process. This should include an interview process.

Where an appointment is made, all staff should subsequently be notified of the outcome.

These procedures should be followed whether the internal promotion is available on a temporary or permanent basis.

6.4 Temporary appointments

Where a temporary vacancy arises, schools must ensure that a fair and open recruitment and selection process is undertaken. The vacancy should be advertised appropriately, and should clearly stipulate the reason why the post is temporary and the proposed duration of the post if the post is fixed-term. This information should be reiterated at all stages of the selection process, ie at interview, in the appointment letter and statement of particulars.

Where a temporary vacancy has arisen, the school may wish to utilise the services of a Supply Teacher or an Agency member of support staff until such time as the temporary post may be advertised, the normal recruitment procedures applied, and the post filled. Lancashire Teaching Agency as one of Lancashire's support services can assist in identifying and placing Supply Teachers. Please also consider the further information in section 21 in relation to the use of Agency staff.

6.5 Temporary posts that carry TLRs

Schools are not able to award a TLR 1 or 2 on a temporary basis. However, they may wish to establish a temporary post that carries a TLR of this level. In these cases, there should be an internal fair and open selection process, with information relating to the duration of the temporary post clearly stated at the outset of the advertisement for the post and upon appointment to it. Once the temporary post reaches its end date, the successful candidate must revert to their original substantive post in school, assuming they are an internal appointment.

TLR 3s may be awarded on a temporary basis, but only for clearly time-limited school improvement projects or one-off externally driven responsibilities.

7. Job Description

A focused job description is the essential starting point for an effective recruitment process and should be constructed carefully to ensure that it reflects the nature of the post and the duties and responsibilities related to it. It should include all the main requirements of the post based on an objective analysis. The job description should outline the main duties of the post, identify lines of accountability and reporting and provide security for applicants of knowing what is expected.

The wording used in job descriptions must be carefully chosen to ensure that it accurately reflects the post and that there is no possibility of direct or indirect discrimination in the wording used. Attached at Appendix A is a suggested structure for a job description. The information that it contains is the basis from which a clear picture of the required knowledge, skills or aptitudes can be clarified.

The job description must also clearly set out the individual's responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the children and young people they are responsible for or come into contact with. All work in schools or similar settings involves degrees of responsibility for safeguarding children, although the extent of that responsibility and the contact involved will vary according to the nature of the post. In this regard, it is useful for job descriptions to include a standard paragraph in relation to the protection of children, for example:

"This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment."

Schools are reminded that the Authority has developed a number of standard job descriptions for school support staff which can be found on the Schools Portal.

For teaching posts, schools may wish to use the professional standards documents for teaching staff to assist in the production of job descriptions.

The job description must be sent to all applicants for the vacancy.

8. Person Specification

The information in the job description must be used to produce a person specification. The person specification is used as the basis for shortlisting and at all subsequent stages of the selection process.

The person specification gives a clear identification of the skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications required of a satisfactory candidate. Without this, recruitment decisions cannot be based on objective evidence, and it is under these circumstances that direct or indirect discrimination is most likely to occur, even if it is done subconsciously. The qualifications, skills and experience necessary to perform the duties of the post should be stated specifically.

Once completed, the person specification will define clearly and succinctly the **minimum** level of skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications needed by a post holder to carry out the job satisfactorily, including requirements needed to perform the job as it relates to children and young people.

The person specification should stipulate how the candidate's suitability for the post will be assessed, including their motivation for the type of work, their ability to make and sustain professional relationships within clear boundaries and their attitudes to authority, challenge and discipline. The person specification provides information that can be used for writing the job advertisement.

Any criteria used in drawing up person specifications should be realistic. Bear in mind that there may be facilities for in-service training and other support available for candidates who show potential, but do not have the knowledge, experience and skills to the level required within an over-inflated person specification. The inclusion of unnecessary criteria may render schools liable to claims of discrimination, and may reduce the possibility of otherwise good candidates progressing through to the next stage of the recruitment process.

Schools may also want to include information on the person specification that gives candidates an indication of where the individual criteria may be assessed (eg application form, interview, reference, DBS disclosure etc). This 'Method of Assessment' column may lead to less time-consuming shortlisting and/or interview processes as it will mean that the panel does not have to assess each criterion at every stage of the process.

A clear person specification will include:

- A written description of the relevant qualifications, experience, skills, attributes and qualities that are required in order to perform the role
- A basis of objective, specific and factual information that is necessary to avoid discrimination in either shortlisting or interviewing
- The criteria against which candidates can be assessed individually and compared in relation to each other, so that the final appointment decision can be arrived at in a fair and open way
- *Essential* criteria, ie those without which a candidate would be unable to do the job and *Desirable* criteria, ie those which contribute to effective performance but are not essential
- Information on which to base interview questions and the basis for determining the interview structure
- The criteria that will be assessed that relate to safeguarding children. For example, motivation to work with children and young people, ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with children and young people, emotional resilience in working with challenging behaviours and ability to appropriately use authority and maintain discipline

A suggested structure is shown at Appendix B.

The person specification must NOT state that a candidate will be of a particular age, ethnic origin, religion (except where agreement has been reached with a Diocesan or other religious board, that being of a particular faith is a requirement of the job), or gender (including marital status or home circumstances), unless the particular gender is an Occupational Requirement. See Appendix P for further information.

Requirements such as a need to be on call during the evening or weekend, or be absent from home on a regular basis, on for instance, school journeys, should be made clear to enable applicants to decide for themselves whether they can meet the requirements. Again, these requirements must be justifiable, and the selection panel must not make assumptions about an applicant's ability to meet these criteria (for example, if they have a young family or caring responsibilities).

When drawing up person specifications, certain job requirements may inadvertently disadvantage certain groups, for example, people with disabilities. It is important, therefore, to check that all stated job requirements are directly related to the needs of the job and that assumptions are not made about the capability of a candidate with a disability. Instead, the panel will need to consider whether a reasonable adjustment to the role/working environment can be made, that will enable a candidate with a disability to meet each job requirement.

It is permissible in appropriate circumstances to include in the person specification aspects which reflect the potential of the post for the career development of the individual in question. Such a post may require a higher standard of qualification than that necessary to perform the immediate tasks of the job in question. Such additional requirements must be fully justifiable within a career development pattern, and must not be listed on the person specification as essential criteria.

Schools are reminded that the Authority has developed a number of standard person specifications for school support staff.

A copy of the person specification must be sent to all applicants.

9. Advertising of Vacancies

All posts where external candidates are welcome to apply, should be publicly advertised (public advertisement for these purposes can mean notification to a Job Centre or advertising via the school website) unless the post has been advertised through the intranet/internet. The content of advertisements should be taken from the job description and person specification and should not contain other extraneous information other than that used for marketing purposes. It is helpful to include any essential requirements, particular experience and qualifications, in advertisements to help applicants self-select appropriate vacancies.

In advertising posts you should avoid wording which may confuse, and avoid specifying gender, age, ethnic origin, religion, marital status, specific home circumstances etc. unless you are certain that they are justifiable in terms of job requirements and legislation (see Appendix O and Appendix P). For example, if the supervision of showering/changing facilities is an essential requirement of the post, then it may be permissible to include gender as an essential requirement as this would be an Occupational Requirement.

The advertisement should include a statement about the employer's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and reference to the need for the successful applicant to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure via the DBS, as well as the usual details of the post, salary, qualifications etc.

Since September 2022 schools have been required to consider conducting online searches on any shortlisted candidates. However, the applicant has a right to know beforehand that this search will be conducted if they are shortlisted. Schools may wish to consider including this information in the advertisement, for example:

> *Please note that in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 an online search will be carried out as part of our due diligence on shortlisted candidates.*

The advertisement should state clearly if the job is temporary or funded from sources which could have an impact on its long-term future, and should specify the end date if it is a fixed-term post.

Where adverts are placed via the LCC Recruitment Team, they ensure that the standard references to DBS and Equal Opportunities are included, and that there is no exclusionary language within the advert that could be potentially discriminatory. Where schools do not use the LCC Recruitment Team for the advert wording, they are advised to follow the guidance above.

9.1 Advertisements for teaching posts

Salaries stated on adverts for teaching positions must be in line with the School Pay Policy. The salary range should be stated within the advert, and the starting salary must be expressly stated when any offer of employment is made.

A Governing Board may wish to take into account the existing salary of a teacher when determining the starting salary to offer the successful candidate. However, there is no requirement for a teacher to be paid the same salary as they were being paid in a previous School, if the School Pay Policy does not specify that it will.

Advertisements should indicate whether there are any Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments attached to the post and if so, provide information in relation to the responsibilities that relate to the TLR.

If the LCC Recruitment Team is dealing with the recruitment for the post, they will require a copy of the job description and person specification for the post to make available to candidates. In the event that these documents are not provided, the LCC Recruitment Team will enclose information within the application pack that directs candidates to the school for further information about the job.

9.2 Placing of Advertisements

School posts (both teaching and support staff) are usually advertised on the LCC Internet (those schools who do not buy into the Schools HR/Payroll Service Level Agreement, will have to pay for this service) and in local press where appropriate, unless they are internal appointments. The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 state that Governing Boards must advertise vacancies for Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher posts 'in such a manner as it considers appropriate unless it has good reason not to.' It is recommended that such posts be advertised externally, and Governing Boards may wish to advertise these posts nationally in the Times Educational Supplement.

Copies of all external advertisements may also be forwarded to local Job Centres.

In the placing of external advertisements, care should be taken to avoid confining them to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the number of applicants from a particular gender or ethnic origin.

The County Intranet is accessible by staff in all maintained schools in Lancashire and is a useful and free source of recruitment for those schools who buy into the Schools HR/Payroll Service Level Agreement.

Under Schedule 14 of the Education Act 1996, Community and Controlled Schools must advertise vacancies in a manner likely to bring it to persons (including employees of the Authority) who are qualified to fill the post. This is best achieved by using the County Intranet and Internet.

Advertisements can encourage applications from groups that are under-represented on the staff, or individuals who might meet the needs of specific pupils. For example, schools may wish to consider using the ethnic minority press to advertise posts requiring experience of working with ethnic minority pupils or bilingualism.

9.3 Asian Language Communication Ability

It is recommended that posts in schools with a high ethnic minority population should include as desirable in the person specification and job advertisement Asian language communication ability and/or an understanding of a particular cultural religious background. In a limited number of posts this requirement may also be made essential where the requirements of the post demand such ability.

9.4 Word of Mouth Recruitment

It is important to ensure that a formal and approved recruitment and selection process occurs for each vacancy. Therefore, word of mouth recruitment should not be used as a sole method of filling a vacancy.

10. Candidate information pack

Applicants, both internal and external, should be provided with as much information as necessary when they apply for a post. Providing the right sort of information at an early stage means that potential applicants will be able to assess themselves against the information provided and judge for themselves whether they should apply for the position. Identifying key selection criteria, highlighting the screening process and the school's vigilance in ensuring children are safeguarded, will attract good applicants and may act as a deterrent to those seeking opportunities to access and abuse children.

The content of the information pack will vary from post to post. Schools may wish to consider including the following:

- Information about the school - the description of the school should be full and accurate and reflect the views of the governing board, to encourage applications from suitable candidates. It will also help applicants to consider whether they would like to work at the school. It may also be useful to provide the School Prospectus and information about the catchment area.

- The job description (Appendix A) and person specification (Appendix B)

- The appropriate application form and guidance notes for completing the form (Appendix C) if these do not already form part of the application form

- Information about the main conditions of service applicable to the post including hours of work, salary (including TLR if appropriate) clarification regarding term time only/full year appointments and the salary consequences of this, whether the post is temporary and if so, the reason for this and the proposed end date

- The School's Equal Opportunities Policy

- A reference to the School's Child Protection Policy. The pack should also advise that the post is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and that any offer of employment will be subject to satisfactory references and DBS check. An advisory note in relation to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is available (Appendix D)

- Somewhere within the recruitment materials schools should inform candidates that they will be conducting online searches on any shortlisted candidates.

- Information pertaining to the requirements of the Asylum, Immigration and Nationality Act 2006 ie Right to Work in the UK (Appendix E)

- For more senior posts, schools may wish to include information on the staffing and management structures of the school

Schools that do not use the Authority's standard application forms and template recruitment and selection documents should also advise candidates of the following:

- the school reserves the right to approach current and any previous employer
- the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act so all convictions must be listed, with dates, unless those convictions have been filtered from the candidate's record by the DBS
- a DBS check will be made on the successful candidate
- an online search will be conducted on any shortlisted candidates
- providing false information makes them liable to summary dismissal
- failure to declare convictions, cautions or pending police action disqualifies them from employment
- the interview will explore the candidate's suitability to work with children and young people. This will include an examination of the applicant's attitudes, strengths and awareness of the responsibilities related to the post.
- all offers of appointments are made subject to a number of checks
- employment will not commence until all checks have been made and cleared
- the successful applicant will be required to adhere to all the school's policies.
- In relation to the Guidance for Safer Working Practice, they may be required upon taking up post to sign a statement confirming their commitment to it and thereafter on a regular basis.

10.1 Smoke-Free Policy

All Lancashire County Council establishments operate a Smoke-free Policy, and this should be referred to in recruitment literature. At interview, selectors should mention the general policy to emphasise the commitment to it.

10.2 Attendance Policy

To assist with effective attendance management, schools may wish to include their Attendance Policy within their candidate information pack, or they may wish to refer to it in recruitment literature. This sends out a clear message to potential applicants that the school places great importance on its employees maintaining good attendance.

11. Qualifications

11.1 Requirements for Qualifications

Where qualifications are required either for the post itself or in relation to a course of study for career development purposes, such qualifications must be indicated as being either 'essential' or 'desirable'. All candidates should formally be asked to show proof of relevant qualifications (ie those stated on the person specification) prior to appointment.

For trans candidates, where an applicant is required to present qualification certificates before a job offer is confirmed and the certificates are in the applicant's

previous name, thereby identifying their previous gender, the documents should be placed in a sealed envelope attached to the file with instructions 'Confidential – Head Teacher only'.

There is a separate policy in relation to trans people which includes additional advice in relation to the recruitment process and personnel records. This can be found on the Schools Portal here

Care should be taken to avoid being over-prescriptive in listing specific qualifications as being 'essential', rather than 'desirable' as this will debar applicants who may otherwise possess appropriate skills and experience from being shortlisted and in some instances may be discriminatory.

11.2 Overseas Qualifications

You should not assume that overseas qualifications are not equivalent to those awarded in the UK. In particular, there are increasingly agreements on equivalency within the European Community. Where there is any doubt, the standard of those qualifications should be checked, if necessary, through the UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills (Tel: 0330 912 0030 or access their Live Chat and ChatBot services available on their homepage).

11.3 Level of Qualifications

Applicants should not be turned down because their qualifications are considered to be too great for the post on offer, except in the most exceptional circumstances. Care should therefore be taken to ensure that the person specification provides a good basis for qualification demands, in order to avoid common misunderstandings where applicants may believe that they have been unfairly discriminated against in relation to their qualifications.

12 Application Forms

12.1 Purpose

The application form serves a number of purposes:

- to aid in the selection of candidates for interview;
- to provide a framework on which the interview can be built;
- to act as a record that forms part of the personal file and the Contract of Employment.

Recruiters should be aware of the dangers inherent in paying too much attention to the way in which the forms themselves are completed. Standards of literacy/neatness should be assessed only in relation to the requirements of the post in question, ie if it was stated on the person specification.

It will greatly assist the process of selection if the Application Form is fully and clearly completed. Internal applicants should also be asked to complete a standard application form. To assist applicants in completing the application form, guidance

notes for completing application forms should be issued with the form. An example of such a guidance note is shown at Appendix C.

Curriculum Vitae must not be used as an alternative to an application form as these may only contain the information that the applicant wishes to present and may omit relevant details.

12.2 Standard Application Forms

Lancashire County Council uses standard application forms that have been drawn up in accordance with DfE guidance in relation to safeguarding children. Voluntary aided church schools may use the standard application forms recommended by their diocesan or church authority.

The LCC standard application forms, which can be used by schools for recruitment and selection processes, are available from the LCC Recruitment Team. Electronic versions of these forms can also be used for candidates that wish to apply electronically. If a candidate submits an electronic application, the declaration at the end of the application form will not be signed. Candidates should not be disadvantaged or excluded from the process due to the fact that they have submitted an unsigned application form. Instead, the selection panel should ensure that any unsigned forms are signed by the candidate at the interview stage.

Where a school wishes to amend the standard forms to reflect their needs or to aid in the selection for specific types of post, they should ensure that their own application forms are similar in content to the LCC standard forms and comply with Equal Opportunities legislation/Keeping Children Safe in Education.

13 Selection Panel

13.1 Panel composition

Once a decision to recruit has been made, and recognising the number of stages that will be necessary to appoint the most suitable person, this is the right time to establish the membership of the Selection Panel, which may consist of designated governors or a Staffing Committee, so that all those involved can participate actively in all the stages of the process including the interview.

Many schools now have designated governors or a Staffing Committee for the whole process of appointing staff. If neither exists, then a selection panel should be convened by the governing board or Headteacher, noting the balance, expertise, representation, interests and number for the panel, as well as their willingness to be a member. The governing board will need to confirm their members' willingness to serve on the selection panel.

The composition of the selection panel should reflect that of the Governing Board. There are no grounds for excluding staff governors other than pecuniary or personal interests under the School Governance Regulations.

In Community and Controlled schools a representative of the Director of Education and Children's Services will be entitled to attend all stages of selection, including the interview. In Aided schools with full delegation the representative may be accorded advisory rights by the Governing Board, and they are recommended to do so by the Diocesan Authorities.

The presence of the representative of the Director of Education and Children's Services is usually limited to senior posts although assistance and advice for specialist subject and phase appointments may be appropriate.

Interviews should never be carried out on a one-to-one basis as this increases the scope for bias and subjectivity. Schools also need to be mindful of the fact that it can be intimidating and off-putting to face a large selection panel. Panel interviews should be used, to reduce the risk of personal biases and to provide a variety of differing opinions and experiences. This ensures that decisions are based on more than one person's assessment. Consideration should also be given to making the panel diverse by, for example, including male and female members and members of black and minority ethnic groups on the panel.

Once a panel has been constituted, its membership (other than in exceptional circumstances) should remain constant throughout the selection process, and this is particularly important during the interview process.

Representatives from external agencies may be invited to attend selection interviews where appropriate, eg when a post has a significant working relationship with that agency. External representatives will be advised by the Chair of the panel that their role is advisory and that they do not have decision-making rights. Any contribution to an interview to be made by an external representative will be discussed by the Selection Panel at a pre-interview briefing meeting.

For further guidance on the role of the Panel at the interview stage, see Section 19.

13.2 Training

It is recommended that staff involved in recruitment or selection should receive adequate instructions and guidance.

The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 require governing boards to ensure that at least one member of the panel has completed appropriate Safer Recruitment training.

The DfE recommend that such training is renewed at least every 5 years.

14 Shortlisting

14.1 Shortlisting Process

Shortlisting should be a process whereby the Selection Panel assesses the suitability of each applicant in relation to the job description and person specification. Criteria for shortlisting will be the extent to which the details shown on the application form match the requirements specified on the person specification. If the key performance criteria have been identified and a standard application form has been received, then the information should be readily available for the panel to consider.

There should be a systematic and consistent approach in drawing up a shortlist of applicants for interview. Each individual's application must be assessed in terms of the selection criteria. Shortlisting should be based solely on the information contained in the application form and letter and measured against the criteria in the person specification, which can be objectively assessed at this stage. The criteria should be applied equally and consistently to all candidates. Additional criteria should not be introduced at this stage.

Essential criteria are the minimum requirements required to perform the role. If a candidate does not meet the essential criteria, then they should not be shortlisted. If an unmanageable number of candidates meet the essential criteria, then the desirable criteria can be used as a further indicator of suitability.

The content of the application form must be measured against the requirements listed on the person specification and not based on assumptions or knowledge held by a panel member about the applicant. This can easily occur if:

i) the applicant is an internal candidate or is/has performed the role on a temporary basis, or is known to a member of the shortlisting panel;
ii) panel members hold or display discriminatory beliefs and behaviours in relation to, for example, the applicant's gender, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious beliefs;
iii) a view is held about the applicant's home life which may affect the job, eg "she will get married, have children and leave", "she will never work late as she has to look after her children", "his wife is disabled, he'll always be looking after her" etc.

Panel members should initially shortlist individually, with each individual member of the panel reviewing the application forms without reference to other panel members. The panel should then convene to discuss and agree their findings and draw up the final shortlist. All members of the shortlisting panel must have equal status and contribute to the process accordingly.

Panel members should resist the temptation to shortlist internal candidates, or those already performing the role on a temporary basis, simply because they feel they ought to give them a chance.

There is no prescription about the number of candidates that should be shortlisted; this decision should be based on the assessment of candidates against the essential requirements of the person specification. Where this number is low, a judgement will need to be taken on whether it is viable to continue with the selection process. Advice is available from Human Resources in such circumstances.

However, if only one candidate meets the essential criteria, then it is perfectly acceptable to shortlist and interview only this candidate. In the situation where a large number of candidates meet the essential criteria, an attempt to reduce this further by using desirable criteria may be used. However, the panel should not use additional criteria that do not appear on the person specification as essential or desirable criteria, to reduce the number of shortlisted candidates.

Part of the shortlisting process also includes highlighting any points or areas of concern which the panel would like to raise with the candidate during the interview. This could include:

- specific areas of work or expertise the panel would like to ask about
- any gaps in employment history
- vague terms or accomplishments which require clarity
- frequent changes of employment or address

Rather than having anything serious to hide, the candidate may have omitted details of extended travel or jobs felt to be of little relevance to the post they are being

interviewed for. However, such gaps in the candidate's employment history must be explored to gain a complete picture of the candidate's history.

A suggested Candidate Summary Sheet for each panel member to use during the shortlisting process, using a simple numerical assessment, is contained at Appendix F. A suitable framework, such as that shown, is necessary to demonstrate objectivity in shortlisting and a proper comparison of the applicants' qualities.

14.2 Retention of Documentation

Documentation relating to shortlisting and the analysis of candidates shown in Appendix F should be kept for a minimum period of twelve months after the appointment has been made. This will enable the panel to justify their decisions in the event that a challenge is made in relation to the selection process through a recruitment complaint or Employment Tribunal.

Candidates who are not shortlisted should receive notification of this as soon as possible, or alternatively a date should be specified in the advert and/or earlier correspondence by which applicants should assume they have not been successful.

14.3 Shortlisting of Applicants with Disabilities

The statutory definition of disability is "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities".

The Equality Act (2010) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability in the arrangements made for entering employment, the terms on which employment is offered or the deliberate refusal to offer employment. Headteachers and Governors must be mindful of the need to consider whether a reasonable adjustment could be made, if required, to assist a person with a disability in the workplace. Recruitment and Selection decisions must be made on merit, after any reasonable adjustment has been implemented. See Appendix O for further information.

It is recommended that schools adopt a policy whereby all suitably qualified candidates with disabilities, ie those possessing the minimum essential requirements specified in the advertisement/person specification, be invited for interview. This policy complies with the "Disability Confident" symbol.

15 References and self-declaration of criminal record

15.1 Requesting references

Appointments should not be made without satisfactory references being received for both internal and external candidates. Where references have not been received or taken up prior to interview, it is preferable to delay making an appointment until satisfactory references are received.

The purpose of seeking references is to obtain objective, factual and verifiable information to support appointment decisions. They should always be sought and obtained directly from the referee. Employers should not rely on references or

testimonials provided by the applicant, or on 'open references' (ie those marked 'to whom it may concern') which are often 'agreed references.' This means that the applicant will have seen the reference and had an opportunity to comment prior to it being sent; therefore it is unlikely to include any adverse comments.

You will also need to be mindful of the fact that references from employers can have their limitations because:

- employers are sometimes hesitant to provide an unfavourable reference for a former employee
- glowing references can sometimes be provided by employers as a way to 'get rid' of an unwanted staff member
- applicants usually select people who will give them a glowing reference
- referees are sometimes friends
- a reference is sometimes negotiated as part of a settlement agreement

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, references must be sought on all candidates and, with a systematic and structured approach, can positively contribute to a vigorous and transparent selection process.

It is recognised that it is common practice for references only to be requested following a conditional offer of appointment being made. However, DfE guidance states that references should be sought on all shortlisted candidates, including internal ones, and be obtained before interview, so that any issues of concern they raise can be explored further with the referee, and taken up with the candidate at interview.

References must always be sought for both internal and external candidates and offers of employment always made subject to receipt of satisfactory references (where these have not been obtained prior to interview), DBS check, satisfactory suitability/criminal history self-declaration, an online search for information related to safeguarding, barred list check (where appropriate), Disqualification Under the Childcare Act 2006 check (where appropriate), prohibition list (teachers and some HLTAs), right to work in the UK check and medical clearance.

In some cases, references may not have been received prior to interview. This should occur only in exceptional circumstances for example, because of delay on the part of the referee, or because a candidate has requested that their current employer is not contacted prior to interview - it is up to the chair of the interview panel, advised by Human Resources, as to whether to respect this request. It should be acknowledged that there may sometimes be personal difficulties between individuals and their employers which may explain why an applicant may not want a past/current employer to be contacted. There should be an opportunity for candidates to explain these circumstances at interview and an expectation by the interview panel that they will do so.

In any case, where a reference has not been obtained on the preferred candidate before interview, you must ensure that a reference is sought, received and scrutinised, and any concerns are resolved satisfactorily, before the person's appointment is confirmed.

Where all references have not been received prior to the interview, care should be taken to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged. Should a recruitment complaint be received, it would not be possible to justify making an appointment

purely because two satisfactory references had been received on one candidate but not the other.

At least two references should be requested for each shortlisted applicant, one of which must be the current or most recent employer. If the applicant is not currently working with children, but has done so in the past, a third reference should be sought from the employer for whom the candidate was most recently employed to work with children. For applicants for posts in a Church School, a faith reference may need to be sought in addition to the two references stated above.

If, however, the applicant does not offer their current employer as their referee on the application form, then the school must approach the applicant to enquire the reason for this and seek permission to do so. If this is refused without an acceptable reason, which should be recorded and kept with the application form, then the school should have strong reservations about employing such an applicant. An acceptable reason may be that the business has ceased trading and therefore staff are no longer contactable. Advice can be sought from Human Resources if this situation arises.

For any establishment, the reference request should be directed to the Headteacher/Head of establishment rather than any alternative named referee provided by the applicant. The Headteacher/Head of Establishment can then delegate the writing of the reference to an alternative employee if they so wish.

Request for reference letters (example provided at Appendix H(i) and H(ii)) should be sent out at the same time as the invitation to interview letters (example provided at Appendix G) and should include a copy of the relevant job description, person specification and a pre-paid envelope for the response. It is wise not to solely rely upon the referee providing a general reference. The use of a reference request proforma can help to ensure that the reference provides valuable, useful and specific information. Examples of such proformas for professional references and character references are included at Appendix I (i) and I (ii).

15.2 Receipt and evaluation of references

Upon receipt, references should be scrutinised to ensure that all specific questions have been answered satisfactorily. If all questions have not been answered or the reference is vague or unspecific, the referee should be contacted and asked to provide verbal or written answers or amplification as appropriate. A record of the comments should be made, as these in effect form part of the reference and may at some point be the subject of challenge.

Where a referee declines to provide additional detail, in particular where there is no verification of the candidate's suitability to work with children/young people, schools may wish to send Appendix I(iv) informing the referee that this may result in the school being unable to allow the application to progress further. If following such correspondence it is still deemed that the reference position remains unsatisfactory, schools may wish to send Appendix I(v) advising the candidate of the position and suggesting that they make their own representations to the referee.

Any reference received should be checked against the information contained within the application form to ensure consistency (eg dates of employment, unanswered questions with regard to disciplinary matters). Any discrepancy or area of concern

should be raised with the applicant either within the interview, or if the reference is not received before interview, at a later stage.

Schools should verify any information with the person who provided the reference and should ensure that any references received electronically originate from a legitimate source.

Comments in references which raise gender, sexual orientation, race or religious belief, age, disability issues or family circumstances must not be taken into account by the selection panel.

Any information about past disciplinary action or allegations should be considered carefully when assessing the candidate's suitability for the post. Cases that were satisfactorily resolved some time ago, or did not require formal disciplinary action, and in which no further issues have been raised, are not likely to cause concern. More serious or recent concerns or issues that were not resolved satisfactorily are more likely to cause concern. A history of repeated concerns or substantiated allegations over time is also likely to be a cause for concern. Your Area Human Resource Managers will be able to provide additional advice and guidance where such concerns are raised.

Referees should be reminded that they have a responsibility to ensure that the reference is accurate and does not contain any material misstatement or omission and that the factual content of the reference may be discussed with the applicant.

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 the author of a reference may stipulate that it is confidential, and need not show it to the employee. However, the receiver of the reference may decide to share the content of the reference with the candidate, after first removing the detail of the author.

There is no legal obligation to provide a reference for current or former employees unless the employee has a contractual right to this, or where it is normal practice in the sector. However, it is rare for an employer to refuse as it is established practice to provide a reference and a refusal could result in adverse consequences for the employee. In the event that a referee does refuse to provide a reference, find out why and seek an alternative referee.

In circumstances where an adverse reference is received, the panel may decide to take any of the following actions:

- Where the reference is unclear or hints at problems, it is advisable to telephone the referee in order to clarify the information. Notes of the conversation should be documented, dated, signed and placed on file.

- Seek clarification on the area of concern with the candidate during the interview. If this proves satisfactory, the panel may appoint.

- Refuse the appointment on the grounds of an unsatisfactory reference. Where this is the case, the panel must ensure that the decision is fair, reasonable and based on justifiable grounds, and that the reasons for the decision are documented in the event of a complaint from the employee.

Appointees should not be allowed to begin work without satisfactory references being received. If references have not been taken up by the interview stage at the request

of the successful candidate, it is suggested that the following form of words be used rather than offering an appointment subject to satisfactory reference:

"You are a strong contender for the post of ……. However, other candidate(s) are also in contention for the post, and we have made no final decision as yet. We cannot complete our consideration without having all the appropriate information to hand, and references play an important part in this. We are therefore seeking your permission to approach your referees. You should not construe this as an offer of appointment; and it is not a conditional offer subject to references. No offer, conditional or otherwise, will be made until satisfactory references have been received."

For staff working in a residential setting with children it is recommended that the recommendations of the Warner Report be followed in relation to references, as set out below:

"Recommendation 17

Employers should require candidates when applying to provide a full employment history, including periods of unemployment, with dates (to the nearest month) and the names and addresses of past employers. Candidates should be free to provide the name of a referee in addition to an employer if they wish.

Recommendation 18

Employers should always approach an applicant's present employer; should tell applicants that they reserve the right to approach any previous employer (or line manager) about a shortlisted candidate's character and performance before interview; should seek written references on the basis that referees have the job description and person specification and are encouraged to comment frankly on shortlisted candidates; and where necessary should explore any aspects of references by telephone with a current or past employer.

Recommendation 19

Employers should keep a record of conversations with referees and pass the result to those responsible for making appointments; and they should retain records of disciplinary offences or concerns that enable them to be passed on to a potential employer when requested in connection with a job which involves working with children."

15.3 Self-declaration of criminal record

Shortlisted candidates should be asked to complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children. Self-declaration is subject to Ministry of Justice guidance on the disclosure of criminal records, further information can be found at Gov.UK

Such information should not be requested on the application form and has been removed from the LCC application forms.

A template self-declaration form for use by schools can be found at Appendix U(i)

A flow chart to assist candidates to decide whether to declare information from their criminal history can be found at Appendix U(ii).

Both documents should be issued to shortlisted candidates with the invitation to interview letter, with a request to return the declaration prior to the interview.

15.4 Providing references

An employer has a duty of care to exercise reasonable skill and care in the preparation of a reference. If this is not done adequately, the employee could bring a claim under one of the following:-

- Negligence – where reasonable care is not taken. An employer may be found to be liable if loss results from the employer's failure to exercise reasonable care in the preparation of a reference
- Defamation – where a reference contains a false or unsubstantiated statement that damages the reputation of a former employee. The employee may be able to claim damages
- Deceit – where a false statement is knowingly made.

Care should also be taken to ensure that no comments are made that could be viewed as discriminatory. For example, a reference referring to someone's absence or the impact of a medical condition on their performance has the potential to be viewed as disability discrimination, particularly if the employer has indicated that they would not re-employ that person for that reason. While such comments might be factually correct, a reference referring to a protected characteristic could result in an employee being successful at an Employment Tribunal.

The employer may be able to defend inaccuracies only where it can be shown it was given in good faith. Likewise, a disclaimer of responsibility could be included:-

"Whilst pleased to provide this reference, it is given on the understanding that this is done without legal responsibility, and with the exclusion of legal liability on the part of and in respect of the organisation providing the reference and the author of it and without legal liability to the subject of it and the recipient of it".

However attractive this disclaimer may appear, it would be unlikely to protect where the supplier of the reference fails to comply with the duty of care, maliciously defames or intends to deceive; however, it can be used to assist in preventing the success of claims.

It should be noted that the author of a reference also owes a duty of care to the recipient of the reference if the reference was carelessly favourable or contained omissions.

Care should be taken to ensure that references:

- Are provided only by those members of staff in school who are authorised to do so – often this will be the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. Headteachers are advised to ensure that staff within school are aware of who has the authority to provide references, what action to take if they receive a reference request directly and that they do not have the authority to provide such a reference. The School Code of Conduct could be used to provide some clarity.

- Are honest and the facts are correct. Even if the discrete components are factually correct, care should be taken to ensure that the reference does not give a misleading overall impression of the employee.
- Are carefully considered. Be cautious about giving subjective opinion about an individual's performance, conduct or suitability which cannot be substantiated with factual evidence
- Do not make comments that could be viewed as discriminatory
- Are written for a specific job vacancy. They should not be written as an "open reference", to be used on an ad-hoc basis.
- Are provided on headed notepaper on behalf of the school in response to a specific request from the prospective employer

Open references are often sought at times of dismissal, redundancy, conduct or capability. Managers sometimes provide these references with the best of intentions, in the hope that the employee will secure alternative employment

It is recommended that this type of reference only be provided where agreement has been reached between employer, employee, TU representative and Human. Resources, for an agreed reference to be produced as part of a settlement agreement.

If you are in any doubt regarding the appropriateness of the content of a reference you are looking to provide, it is recommended that you seek advice from your Area Human Resources Manager.

15.5 Withdrawing a conditional offer

As long as it is made clear to a prospective employee that an employment offer is conditional, the offer can be withdrawn if a condition is not satisfied. A contract of employment is only made where there has been an unconditional offer and an unconditional acceptance, supported by the intention to create a legal relationship.

An example conditional offer letter can be found at Appendix S.

An example letter withdrawing a conditional offer can be found at Appendix X.

16 Online searches and checks via social media

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 states that schools should consider carrying out a search (via an online search engine) as part of their due diligence on the 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. Schools and colleges should inform shortlisted candidates that online searches may be done as part of due diligence.

Advice in relation to carrying out these searches can be found at Appendix W(i). A form to assist school in recording the outcome of such searches can be found at Appendix W(ii). However, schools should feel free to modify the template form as they feel appropriate.

Conducting an online search is not the same as considering information from a candidate's social media/internet profile, something which has become increasingly common for employers when making a recruitment decision. Schools should not be looking at Facebook, Instagram etc as this could introduce bias into the recruitment

process and result in recruiters discriminating against candidates, even if this is done unconsciously.

Employers are not allowed to discriminate against a candidate on the grounds of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, or union membership. Such information may be divulged via social media searches, and candidates may claim discrimination if information gained via social media is used as grounds for ruling someone out of the recruitment process.

17 Pre-Interview Stage

17.1 Arranging the interviews

Where there are a number of candidates to be interviewed on a particular day it is important to draw up a timetable which allows adequate time for each individual. It is important that the same amount of time is scheduled for each candidate so that one person is not perceived as having an unfair advantage over other candidates.

It is both sensible and courteous to allow adequate time between interviews to allow for assessment, note writing, preparation for the next candidate and natural breaks. A candidate who is kept waiting may be more nervous and less likely to give their best when eventually called for interview.

Selection panels may wish to ensure that if candidates are travelling some distance, consideration is given to the timing of their interview; particularly if candidates will be expected to remain until all the interviews are completed.

17.2 Inviting candidates for interview

Where the interview date is soon after shortlisting, an immediate telephone call to shortlisted individuals, providing them with basic details of time and date, would be in order. It can also be helpful to include the proposed date of interviews within the advert for the post or candidate information pack if this is known at the time of advertising/ sending out packs.

A letter confirming the details of the interview should be sent to each candidate. An example letter is attached at Appendix G. This letter should also include information for applicants about the requirement for DBS clearance, online searches, qualification checks and checks under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006. To emphasise the importance of the DBS Disclosure, it is useful to provide candidates with a note in relation to the DBS, such as the one contained at Appendix J.

The letter may also include the following:-

- location/map;
- a description of the location specifying any potential difficulties in accessibility for a person with a disability, with a request that they inform the writer should any special arrangements be required;
- approximate duration of interview/structure of the day's programme;
- details of any additional tasks the candidate will be required to undertake (eg presentation, typing test etc);
- how to claim travel/subsistence expenses and details of allowable expenses (if the school wishes to allow such claims);
- local overnight accommodation where appropriate.

17.3 Pre-Interview Visits

Pre-interview visits should take place on a different day from that of the interview wherever possible. Ideally such visits should be arranged individually, and carefully structured and key staff should be available.

The visit gives candidates the opportunity to see the school in session and to form initial impressions which may be explored at interview. It is not part of the selection process. It is an entirely voluntary process, and it should not be assumed by the Panel that the candidate has a lack of motivation or interest if they did not undertake a pre-interview visit.

The position of applicants with disabilities must be recognised and special arrangements may have to be considered for a pre-interview visit.

17.4 Looking after candidates

In promoting the school's image, it is important to make arrangements for receiving candidates attending for interview. An individual, preferably not one involved in the selection process, should be identified to be responsible for looking after candidates and should be aware of the following:

- names of candidates and times of attendance;
- location of interviews and where candidates will be required to wait;
- procedure for notifying the Selection Panel of each candidate's arrival.

The role of this person may include:

- welcoming the candidates on arrival;
- ensuring that their application form has been signed in person, where applicants had the option of submitting the form electronically
- introducing the candidates to each other and relevant staff within the school/team;
- providing them with refreshments on arrival and throughout the day;
- showing them the waiting room, interview room and the toilet facilities;
- escorting them to and from the interview (if this is not undertaken by a member of the Panel);
- providing reading materials;
- escorting them around the school;
- providing them with the timetable for the day and clarifying their part in the procedure, eg

- whether they can visit the classrooms when waiting to be interviewed;
- whether or not they are invited to stay until the decision has been made;
- whether or not the unsuccessful candidates are to be given immediate feedback or a contact number/address for subsequent feedback.

Wherever possible, schools should ensure that particular needs of candidates (such as mobility problems, or audio/visual impairment) are accommodated.

17.5 Room layout

The waiting room area should preferably be a comfortable room that does not adjoin the interview room.

The interview room/s should be arranged to look welcoming and as comfortable as possible, as the setting in which the interview is carried out can have a bearing on the success of the interview.

Take into account environmental factors which may have a bearing on the performance of both interviewers and interviewees. For example:

- suitability of a room for a private conversation;
- the layout of the room in order to encourage communication. It should not intimidate or isolate the candidate, by, for example, having them facing direct sunlight or sitting on a low chair in front of an imposing desk with a large number of Panel members sitting behind it;
- comfort of seating and practicability of tables/furniture;
- the avoidance of interruptions by telephone and visitors.

18 Selection tests

Psychometric ability tests are produced by commercial test suppliers, eg ASE or Saville and Holdsworth. These are used to assess applicants' aptitude for certain aspects of managerial, professional, clerical and manual posts.

Work sample and work simulations, eg typing tests, teaching practice, are tests that can be specifically designed for the post in question.

Such tests will improve the quality of selection where they are properly designed and used, for example as part of an assessment centre process approach. In order to ensure proper use of such tests, in particular Ability Tests, they should only be used under the supervision of a qualified test user.

Personality Questionnaires should not be confused with Ability Tests. Generally, they do not lend themselves easily to use in respect of many posts in schools and are not recommended for such use without advice and assistance from an approved tester.

18.1 Assessment Centre Process

The majority of appointments will be made following a standard process involving shortlisting and interviewing before reaching a decision. In some instances, however, an assessment centre process approach may be adopted. This method of selection involves the application of a variety of assessment mechanisms, including occupational tests, aptitude tests, presentations, discussions, written tests and interviews to aid a final selection decision. Such an approach, where carefully prepared and properly conducted, can have a significantly greater validity in terms of a successful appointment in comparison to a standard interview process.

It is important that, in relation to the more technical/complex aspects, staff involved in designing and running such a process should have undertaken the appropriate training, or at least be guided by people who have expertise in this area.

19 Interviews

The aim of the interview is to enable the experience, abilities and qualities of all shortlisted candidates to be assessed against the person specification. The interview is also used to give prospective employees a picture of the school and the job, and maintain and improve the image of the organisation as an employer of choice.

All persons making appointments should endeavour to conduct interviews on an objective basis and interviews must only be concerned with the applicant's suitability for the job. The interview should be an exchange of information which will help you to assess the candidate against the agreed objective criteria laid down in the person specification, and will also explore the candidate's suitability to work with children. The interview is not just a test for candidates. It is also a test of a panel member's ability to listen, probe, assess and be objective and fair.

It is important to ensure that the interviews are carried out in a systematic and structured way in order to minimise the extent to which personal bias affects recruitment decisions.

In order to ensure consistency and fairness throughout the process, the format of the interview should be the same for each candidate. This ensures that candidates are questioned in a similar way, and that all candidates are given the same information about the job. All candidates should be asked the same core questions, which candidates should be scored on. The panel may also have areas that they wish to explore with each candidate relating to information provided on their application form/self-declaration form, discovered via an online search or provided within their references, and these will usually be different for each candidate.

If the candidate has, in answer to a previous question, appeared to answer a subsequent question, that question should still be asked and the candidate given the opportunity of addressing the question directly, or supplementing the information already given. Supplementary questions may be asked by any panel member, but should only be used as clarification and elaboration of a candidate's answers, ie probing for further information and clarity in order to evidence specific information to satisfy the original question. Be careful that the supplementary questions do not disrupt the flow of the interview. You can also use probing questions to ask candidates about specific aspects of their application/interview responses/references if required. Advice and guidance for preparing interview questions can be found at Appendix K.

It is advised that, wherever possible, all interviews for a vacancy should be held on the same day. Where this is impossible no more than two or three days should be allowed to elapse before finalising the interviews. In these circumstances, the panel membership must remain the same.

The interview should also explore the candidate's suitability to work with children and their ability to support the school's agenda for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The Panel should also check any gaps in the candidate's employment history and any concerns or discrepancies arising from the information provided by the candidate and/or a referee. The candidate should also be asked regarding any matters that have been declared on their criminal record/suitability self-declaration (Appendix U(i)).

If references have not been received prior to the interview, the candidate should also be asked at interview if there is anything they wish to declare or discuss in light of the questions that have been put to their referees.

A suggested structure/format for interviews is contained within Appendix L.

Trans candidates

Managers should not ask questions about an applicant's gender identity. If an individual chooses to mention this during the interview, they should be informed that the school supports trans employees and assured that the disclosure will have no bearing on the outcome of the interview, will not be revealed outside the interview room or noted on the interview record.

There is a separate policy in relation to trans people which includes additional advice in relation to the recruitment process and personnel records. This can be found on the Schools Portal here

19.1 Conducting the Interview

Interview Panel

Members of the interview panel should:

- have the necessary authority to make decisions about appointment;
- be appropriately trained (at least one member of the panel must have completed appropriate Safer Recruitment Training);
- have met before the interview to agree what standards they are looking for at interview;
- determine who will ask what and what assessment criteria they will use in accordance with the person specification.

The function of the interviewer is to encourage candidates to show their strengths and skills during the interview, bearing in mind that interviewing is a process of selection not rejection.

The three basic elements of a good interview are:

Contact - establishing a rapport with the interviewee

Content - asking appropriate questions and listening to the replies to see how they relate to what is wanted and needed to be known

Control - steering the interview in the appropriate direction to achieve the interview objectives which may involve bringing the interviewee gently back to the point of the question or preventing them from re-treading the ground already covered.

Each interviewer will preferably have been allocated a topic for questioning or specific questions to ask. Duplication of questions should be minimised if the structure of the interview is adhered to.

The Panel should ensure that they are as welcoming to the candidates as possible, that they do not shuffle through their papers or talk to one another during the interview, that mobile devices are turned to silent and not used during the interview and that they are not impatient with unfamiliar accents or intonations. At the end of the interview the candidates should be thanked for applying for the post.

The panel should meet prior to the interview to plan and agree which questions will be asked, and which panel member will ask which questions and therefore they should know which areas of the person specification they wish to explore at interview. Panel members should also have a clear idea as to the key points which they expect to be covered within the candidates' responses. In addition to the core list of questions, they may also wish to explore more in-depth information on other aspects of the application form or references.

19.2 Role of the Chair

The Chair has an important role on the panel, which includes:

- making necessary introductions to the candidates at interview and explaining the structure and format of the interview process. If candidates are to make a presentation it should be made clear when this will take place and for how long.
- ensuring that the candidate feels sufficiently at ease to be able to communicate effectively during the course of the interview. This can be achieved by asking a general question first, such as "Can you tell us what particularly attracted you to this post?"
- ensuring that the interview panel has probed the candidate sufficiently well to enable a valid suitability assessment to be made regarding the candidate's ability to do the job and preventing any questioning of a candidate which could be judged to be discriminatory.
- see that each interview takes roughly the same time and covers the same topics. Occasionally the candidate may not understand the question and the chair may be able to rephrase the question so that it can be more easily understood.
- concluding the interview and informing the candidate what the subsequent stages of the process are. A useful way of bringing the interview to an end is to give candidates the opportunity to ask any questions that they might have, or say anything further about themselves in relation to their application.
- Ask the candidates if they will accept the job if it is offered to them.

The Chair should not ask all the questions during an interview. It is more valuable if others contribute, and the Chair plays a less prominent role.

Guidance in relation to interview questions can be found at Appendix K.

19.3 Verification of identity

It is important that all prospective employees (including people already employed by the Authority) have their identity confirmed via a photographic check. Therefore candidates must be asked, wherever possible, to provide the school with identity documentation that contains a photograph. They should also be asked to take a

recent passport sized photograph from which they can be clearly identified to interview.

At the interview the reverse of this photograph must be signed by the chair of the panel to confirm that it is a true likeness and matches the photo identity documentation provided. The photograph of the successful candidate will be retained on their personal file. The cost of producing the photograph is to be borne by the applicant. Unsuccessful candidates are entitled to request that the photograph be returned to them. If they do not request that their photograph is returned, it should be destroyed. If candidates do not provide a photograph at the interview, then the panel may take the decision that they should no longer be considered for the post. This must be made clear to candidates in the invite to interview letter (Appendix G).

Trans candidates

The requirement to provide proof of identity to confirm the right to work in the UK can be particularly sensitive for a trans applicant whose identification documentation may be in their previous names. Schools should ensure that an applicant is made aware of the full range of permissible identification documents and that the process of checking is handled sensitively and with respect for the privacy of the individual.

Where an individual's documentation reveals their previous name and thereby their gender history, this information will be kept confidential and stored securely with the permission of the individual and in accordance with the school's data protection policy.

There is a separate policy in relation to trans people which includes additional advice in relation to the recruitment process and personnel records. This can be found on the Schools Portal here

19.4 Recording Assessments

It is important that all interviewers keep notes to ensure that a properly reasoned assessment can be made as to whether a candidate meets the requirements of the person specification and whether they are suitable to work with children. It also enables a fair comparison to be made between candidates at the end of the interview process.

Remember, any paperwork used to record assessment and selection decisions may be used in candidate feedback, in the event of a recruitment complaint, or in the event of any legal action taken by an unsuccessful applicant and will, therefore, need to be retained for a minimum period of 12 months. Any notes should be collected by the chair and retained pending any subsequent queries to the panel.

In the course of an interview a substantial amount of information should have been communicated by the candidate. When there are a number of candidates it can be difficult to recall at the end of the process who said what and it is easy to confuse candidates unless notes are made to recall individual strengths and weaknesses.

Notes taken during an interview can be vital not only in assisting in the final decision of who the best person for the job actually is, but may well be used as factual evidence during an Employment Tribunal hearing or by the Governors if a candidate complains of unfair treatment.

The important notes to make are those which provide evidence of the qualities and skills the candidate brings to the post and exhibits at interview, which match the requirements of the post as listed in the initial criteria and employee specification.

Interviewers, like everyone else, may instinctively prefer one person to another. But it is important to look for separate and distinct evidence. A systematic approach encourages fair selection.

The Chair should ensure that there is no discussion of candidates between interviews. This should only happen after all the candidates have been seen, to help give all candidates a fair chance.

19.5 Red flags and warning signs in interviews

The DfE accepts that it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify an abuser during selection processes or to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. The purpose of Safer Recruitment guidance is to make it as difficult as possible for such people to gain access to children.

There are no conclusive sex offender profiles and no distinguishing physical characteristics. It is highly unlikely that someone with a history of offences against children would admit to these crimes. It is more likely that the sex offender will be watchful, studious and extremely careful not to exhibit any overt signals. Warning signs can be as subtle as the individual who talks of being a friend to all the local children, the one who takes the children out or who has exceptional rapport with them, the individual may offer an overly smooth presentation, or be exceptionally keen to please. There may be strange or inappropriate comments about children or signs of evasion or dishonesty. However, there may be none of these signs and indeed the individual may simulate the very person the panel had in mind for the job.

It is vital that interview panels keep an open mind and do not stereotype child abusers. Even though it is a complex area, do not stop looking for signs. When working with children and young people, all adults should be alert to the possibility that the behaviour of some adults, albeit a minority, may pose a risk.

Individuals unsuited to working with children may show one or more characteristics that can be viewed as possible danger signs. These are included in the Authority's Safer Recruitment training. It is recommended that this list of characteristics be viewed by a trained member of the panel, and shared with other panel members prior to the interview taking place.

20. Appointing the Successful Candidate

20.1 Assessment of candidates/final choice

Once all the candidates have been seen, the Chair, Headteacher or Adviser may sum up the relative merits of the candidates in relation to the post. This summing up may take place either before or after the Panel discuss the candidates. When reaching a decision the Panel will want to take account of information from five sources - the application form, the self-declaration form, the online searches, the references and the interview.

Discussions should concentrate on evaluating each candidate's relevant qualities and experience in relation to the criteria for the post. It may be possible to eliminate some candidates almost immediately if they do not fulfil the criteria, requirements and standards detailed in the person specification.

The Selection Panel can then continue to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the remaining candidates, and may wish to use a similar scoring method to that used at the shortlisting stage. It may then be possible to eliminate further candidates or recommend an appointment.

It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that in determining whether to reject a candidate, the Panel only consider factors relevant to the post. When a candidate without a certain requirement for a post has nevertheless been short-listed for interview, the candidate should not be subsequently rejected solely on the grounds of failing to meet that requirement. It is the Chair's role to ensure that the Panel maintains consistency and notes the reasons for eliminating candidates in order that the process of feedback can retain objectivity.

As stated earlier in the guide, the "Disability Confident" status includes a commitment to guarantee an interview for any applicant with a disability that meets the essential requirements for a vacancy. However, any appointment decision thereafter must be made solely on merit. This Policy is permissible within the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 Section 7 "Appointment on merit" and is seen as meeting the reasonable adjustment requirements of the Equality Act.

The Panel must decide which candidate to appoint. All Panel members must have the opportunity to give their views prior to a vote being taken. If no agreement is reached, they can decide to re-interview, including candidates meeting the criteria who were not originally short-listed if they feel that it would lead to their being able to make an appointment, or the post can be re-advertised.

The final decision should be based on an objective assessment of the candidate's qualities and a record should be made of the assessment of each candidate on the post-interview report form (Appendix M).

If no candidate shows sufficient evidence of meeting the selection criteria of the post, then an appointment should not be made, and the post should be re-advertised. The Panel should check whether the advertisement contained a misleading or off-putting phrase or was overshadowed by a competitive advertisement.

Occasionally the Panel might be able to learn something from the candidates about how the advertising and selection procedure could be improved. Candidates may be willing to express an opinion informally and help the school to change their procedure to make it more effective in the future.

All records of shortlisting, interviews and the application forms of all candidates should be retained for a period of at least twelve months in case there is a query or complaint.

20.2 Notifying a Decision

Candidates should be told in advance how and when they can expect to hear the result of the interview. It is not necessary to ask candidates to wait behind for the decision of the Selection Panel, and many candidates prefer not to. Candidates can

be told the results later by telephone and this should be followed up with a letter. Once the decision on the successful candidate has been made and the conditional offer accepted, each applicant should be notified as quickly as possible.

If, however, the Panel has decided to ask candidates to remain after the interviews, in order to make an initial verbal conditional offer, then a Panel member should notify the other candidates of the decision and thank them for their attendance.

The initial verbal conditional offer should normally specify the commencing salary/wage and the hours per week and will deal with any other outstanding conditions of service points raised at the interview by the chosen applicant.

There should be a written conditional offer. For those schools who use Lancashire County Council for their payroll provision, the Payroll & Recruitment Service will automatically issue such a letter once they are notified of the appointment.

However, should a school wish to issue such a letter in advance of this. an example conditional offer letter can be found at Appendix S

The candidate may request details of salary or seek to negotiate. However, the offer should be made in accordance with the post as advertised.

After acceptance of the conditional offer of appointment by the successful applicant, other applicants interviewed should also be contacted and will normally be notified in writing that they have been unsuccessful and thanked for their interest and attendance.

21 Conditional offer of appointment – checks and verification

The initial offer of employment to the successful candidate should be conditional upon:

- The receipt of at least two satisfactory references (see Section 15)
- Verification of the candidate's identity – it is important to be sure that the person is who they claim to be. Best practice should include checking the name on the birth certificate.
- Verification of the candidate's right to work in the UK.
- (Where appropriate) a check of the list of those barred from working with children (in some establishments a check of the list of those barred from working with vulnerable adults may also be required for certain staff)
- A check against the prohibition list for teachers and some HLTAs
- A satisfactory DBS enhanced disclosure (this will include a check of the barred lists where the postholder will be working in regulated activity)
- If the person has lived or worked outside of the UK, any further checks that the school considers appropriate
- Verification of the candidate's medical fitness (the school will need to make a referral to their Occupational Health Provider in order to seek such verification)
- Verification of relevant required qualifications
- Verification of professional status where required, e.g. Qualified Teacher Status, NPQH
- (For teaching posts) verification of successful completion of statutory induction period (applies to those who obtained QTS after 7 May 1999)
- (For non-teaching posts) satisfactory completion of the probationary period

- (Where appropriate) a satisfactory check that the candidate is not disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006. Further guidance on eligibility for and undertaking this check is available on the Schools Portal
  Disqualification Under the Childcare Act

When a job offer is made, care should be taken to ensure that the offer does not discriminate on the grounds of race, sex, marital status, sexual orientation or disability in the terms on which the employment is offered or generally in affording access to any benefits, facilities or services, or salary point. Appointments should not be offered solely subject to receipt of satisfactory references.

21.1 Attendance History

It is important to ensure that any candidate appointed to a vacancy will be able to sustain regular attendance at work. However provisions within the Equality Act 2010 mean that questions on medical history and sickness levels can no longer be asked prior to an offer of employment being made.

In cases where references are requested after the interview process, once a provisional offer of employment has been made subject to checks and vetting, then questions in relation to sickness levels can be included in the reference request. However since the safeguarding guidance recommends that references are requested prior to the interview stage, questions in relation to sickness levels should not be asked as part of the reference. The reference proformas contained at Appendix I (i) and (ii) do not include questions in relation to sickness absence levels.

An example letter is contained at Appendix I (iii) that can be sent to a referee that has already provided a full reference, to enquire about the sickness levels of a candidate that has been provisionally offered a post. Once this information is received, if it appears that there is a concern about the attendance levels, then the candidate should be invited to respond to specific absence-related questions. Once this information is received, the Headteacher/Panel must then decide whether to proceed with the offer of employment.

In considering absence history, the Panel should consider whether the candidate had any control over the absence e.g. absence relating to a road traffic accident, whether the absence pattern shows a recurrent pattern of absence, whether any of the absences were as a result of a condition that may fall under the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010 or whether the absences were due to a pregnancy-related illness.

For the Panel to decide that the provisional offer of employment should be withdrawn, they must ensure that the person specification contains criteria that relate to attendance at work, against which they can assess the candidate's levels of attendance. An example of an essential criteria could be "A commitment to sustaining regular attendance at work/satisfactory attendance record".

Schools may also wish to consider whether to include a copy of the school absence procedures within the candidate information pack as this sends out a clear message to potential applicants that the school places a strong emphasis on good attendance.

Before withdrawing a provisional offer of employment because of a candidate's attendance history, it is recommended that you seek advice from your Area Human Resources Manager.

See also section 21.6 'medical clearance'.

21.2 DBS Application and Disclosure

All posts in schools will be subject to a disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

For all posts, the successful candidate must apply to the DBS for a disclosure to confirm any records held prior to any final appointment decision being made by the school/Authority – this application will be made on-line by the successful applicant.

Further detail on the checking process should be provided to the selected candidate as soon as possible following the conditional acceptance of the position.

As stated in Keeping Children Safe in Education, *'The applicant must show the original paper DBS certificate to their potential employer before they take up post, or as soon as practicable afterwards.'*

The DBS check will include:-

- details of convictions, including those 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1975) – see Appendix D and Appendix O
- cautions, bind overs etc,
- whether the individual is included on one of the barred lists (if the candidate is to be employed in regulated activity and the school has requested this level of check)
- Where appropriate, information from Police records, including any information that a chief officer of a police force considers relevant to the application

Where the school has used an online DBS provider, and has not verified that the appointee has included all their previously known by names on their DBS application, this should be checked when the paper DBS certificate is seen.

A conviction is not necessarily a bar to recruitment, unless the school/Authority considers that the conviction renders the candidate unsuitable for appointment. In making this decision, consideration will be given to the nature of the offence, how long ago it occurred, what age the candidate was when it was committed and any other factors which may be relevant. The Authority has developed a guidance note on the employment of ex-offenders, which provides advice for schools when considering the appointment of an employee that has declared a conviction/caution, including a risk assessment tool to use. This document can be found on the School's Portal Re-employment of ex-offenders

The Authority has also produced a template policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders which can be found at Appendix V.

It is an offence for an individual who has been disqualified from working with children to knowingly apply for, offer to do, or accept or do any work in a regulated position. An individual is disqualified from working with children if they are included on one of the barred lists or are disqualified from working with children and/or vulnerable adults as part of a sentence.

Trans candidates

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) offers a confidential checking service for trans applicants in accordance with the Gender Recognition Act 2004. This is known as the sensitive applications route and is available for all levels of DBS check.

The sensitive applications route gives trans applicants the choice not to have any gender or name information disclosed on their DBS certificate that could reveal their previous identity.

Individuals who are asked to complete a DBS check and have a previous identity that they do not wish to be disclosed to schools and/or on their DBS certificate, may call or email the dedicated sensitive applications team before submitting their application.

Individuals who are happy to have their previous identity disclosed on their certificate, do not need to contact the sensitive applications team and can simply submit this information under the 'any other names' section of their application.

An individual using the confidential checking service, will still complete the same application form as any other applicant.

Some FAQs regarding DBS can be found at Appendix R.

21.3 Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006

In some settings some staff are required to undergo a satisfactory check that the candidate is not disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006. Further guidance on eligibility for and undertaking this check is available on the Schools Portal

Disqualification under the childcare act

21.4 School record keeping

Schools are required to maintain a single central record covering all staff who work at the school and all others who work in regular contact with children in the school, including volunteers and agency staff, even if they only work for one day.

The information to be recorded on these individuals is whether or not the following checks have been carried out or certificates obtained, and the date on which the checks were completed.

- Identity – how to check identity;
- A barred list check (where appropriate);
- A DBS check - for all those who require a check under the guidance and regulation applying at the time they were recruited
- A prohibition from teaching check (see below)
- Qualifications – where the qualification is a requirement of the job, e.g. those posts where a person must have QTS;
- Further checks on people who have lived or worked outside the UK – additional checks that the school feels are appropriate so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered

- A check to establish the person's right to work in the UK
- Where appropriate, a satisfactory check that the candidate is not disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006 (it is discretionary as to whether to include this check on the single central record)
- Online check (it is discretionary as to whether to include this check on the single central record).

For those schools who use the LCC Payroll and Recruitment Services, the prohibition check **for teachers** and the QTS check will be done automatically on receipt of new appointment documentation. However, Payroll do not inform schools that the checks have been undertaken - they would only contact a school in the event that a sanction is divulged by the check.

For those schools who have HLTAs undertaking work defined as 'teaching work' under the Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012, schools need to ensure that the prohibition check is undertaken on those staff using prohibition checks

'Teaching work' is defined as: planning and preparing lessons and courses for pupils; delivering lessons to pupils; assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils; and reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils. These activities are not teaching work for the purposes of these Regulations if the person carrying out the activity does so (other than for the purposes of induction) subject to the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher or other person nominated by the head teacher to provide such direction

A letter confirming that such checks are undertaken on teachers by the Local Authority can be found at Appendix T. Schools are advised to keep this letter with the single central record as confirmation of when the relevant checks are carried out and by whom.

Schools who do not use the services of the LCC Payroll/Recruitment Teams, or who wish to undertake checks for themselves so that they have confirmation of the date they were carried out, should undertake the checks via prohibition checks

This system can be used to identify any existing prohibitions and sanctions and any sanctions or restrictions imposed by the General Teaching Council for England before its abolition on 31st March 2012. It will also provide information about any teacher qualifications held and whether induction has been passed.

An example Single Central Record template has been provided to schools, via the Portal, by the Schools Safeguarding Team. single central record

Schools must ensure that they maintain this central record by adding the details of all new appointees to the school and deleting appointees who no longer work/volunteer at the school.

Some FAQs regarding the Single Central Record can be found at Appendix R

Schools do not have to keep copies of DBS certificates in order to fulfil the duty of maintaining the single central record. Where schools choose to retain a copy, in order to comply with the Data Protection Act, they should not be retained for longer than 6 months unless there is a good reason to do so. This also applies to any printed confirmation of a clear check produced by an on-line DBS system.

A copy of the other documents used to verify the successful candidate's identity, right to work in the UK, checks undertaken where the individual has lived or worked abroad and required qualifications, should be kept on the individual's personnel file.

Trans candidates

Where an individual's documentation reveals their previous name and thereby their gender history, this information will be kept confidential and stored securely with the permission of the individual and in accordance with the school's data protection policy.

The same approach will apply where an applicant is required to present qualification certificates before a job offer is confirmed and the certificates are in the applicant's previous name. This often entails every effort being made to obtain the documents in the new name and gender but where this is not possible the documents should be placed in a sealed envelope attached to the file with instructions 'Confidential – Head Teacher only'.

There is a separate policy in relation to trans people which includes additional advice in relation to the recruitment process and personnel records. This can be found on the Schools Portal here

Schools should also retain on the personnel file:

- Application form (physically signed)
- References
- Job description and person specification
- Post interview report form (Appendix M)
- (Where appropriate) the latest Disqualification Under the Childcare Act Declaration Form
- The latest Annual Staff Confirmation Form (where used in school)
- The latest contract letter (unless this is retained electronically elsewhere in school)
- Details of any live disciplinary sanctions/any management instructions issued
- Appraisal documentation
- Details of any safeguarding concerns investigated and the outcome of those investigations (unless such allegations were found to be malicious). These records should be retained at least until the employee has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer. A template Record for file can be found on the Schools Portal. *Details of allegations that have been found to be false or malicious should be removed from personnel files unless the individual gives their consent for retention of the information.*
- Risk assessments
- Details of any required training (if not recorded elsewhere)
- Return to work interviews and absence monitoring
- Letter of resignation

With the exception of safeguarding concerns (referred to above) which is for longer, it is recommended that personnel files should be retained for a period of 6 years following the termination of employment for support staff.

The Human Resource, Payroll and Pension Data Retention Policy states that Personal Files for Teachers will be retained until the individual's 85th birthday.

Consideration should also be given to retaining any information which may help resolve queries from the Teachers' Pension Scheme in future years, such as reasons for any periods without pay, periods of maternity leave etc. This is because the Career Average scheme require employers to provide information to Teachers' Pensions under separate regulations authorised under section 16 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. These regulations are the Public Service Pensions (Record Keeping and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 1st April 2015.
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3138/regulation/4/made

21.5 DBS & Agency staff

Where it is necessary to provide for casual appointments to cover occasional/emergency vacancies, eg to cover sickness absences, an advert should be placed on each occasion.

Schools may wish to utilise the services of an Employment Agency to fill casual vacancies on a short-term basis.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026) states that *'schools **must** obtain written notification from any agency, or third-party organisation, that they have carried out the same checks as the school would otherwise perform on any individual who will be working at the school.'*

It also states that *'the school should also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made*.'

In relation to a DBS check which has disclosed information, KCSIE states *'Where the agency or organisation has obtained an enhanced DBS certificate before the person is due to begin work at the school, which has disclosed any matter or information, or any information was provided to the employment business the school **must** obtain a copy of the certificate from the agency.'*

To assist schools in complying with this guidance, the Schools HR Team has devised a checklist which can be completed and signed by a representative of any Supply Agency used by the School, so that they can be confident that the Agency's systems and procedures for the recruitment and selection of supply staff are in line with the established safer recruitment and selection best practice that is employed within School. This may be found at Appendix Q.

It is not obligatory to use the checklist, but if it is used, the completed checklist could then be retained with the School's Single Central Record.

Schools are still advised to obtain from the Agency an 'umbrella' letter confirming that their staff are appropriately DBS/barred list checked, which will also be retained with the Single Central Record

21.6 Medical Clearance

An offer of appointment will be subject to satisfactory medical clearance. Managers will need to refer the prospective employee to Occupational Health by

using Occupational Health's online referral system. The appointee will then be contacted by Occupational Health who will arrange for them to complete their on-line health declaration form. Occupational Health will then provide guidance on the suitability of appointing, relative to the requirements of the job.

21.7 Asylum, Immigration and Nationality Act 2006

The Act makes it a criminal offence to employ a person aged 16 or over without authorisation by the immigration authorities.

Employers are required to check the identity of potential employees and confirm that they are eligible to live and work in the UK. Appendix E provides further information about the Act and outlines the documentation that should be produced by potential employees to verify their employment status.

22 Post Interview Feedback

After interview, candidates should be offered the opportunity to receive feedback in order to assist them in their career development. Many unsuccessful candidates are not in a receptive frame of mind to receive such feedback immediately after interview.

It should be recognised however, that feedback of this nature needs to be carried out on a professional basis, with sensitivity and with awareness of good human resources practices. This is because it carries with it a possibility of placing dissatisfaction in the mind of the applicant in relation to the conduct of the interview, leading to an unnecessary complaint through formal complaints procedures. To reduce this possibility, it is suggested that post-interview feedback is given by the Headteacher or other senior member of staff who took part in the interview, who has appropriate experience and who is aware of equal opportunities legislation. The advice offered to an individual in a post-interview situation should convey the views of the Panel. Whilst the expression of personal views should be avoided, if they are given, they should be clearly identified as such. Great care should be taken with any views expressed since they may be used in any formal complaints procedure.

23 Complaints

Any unsuccessful applicant may wish to make a formal complaint about a recruitment and selection process. External candidates may use the School's Complaints Procedure for this purpose, while internal candidates must use the School's Grievance Procedure. Such complaints are the responsibility of the Governing Board to investigate. Advice can be sought from the Schools HR Team.

24 Further Advice

Where there is any doubt about the application of this guidance or the requirements of the relevant legislation and County Council Policy, guidance should be sought from the Schools HR Team.