



ABINGDON  
HOUSE SCHOOL & COLLEGE

# Safer Recruitment Policy

<p><b>Responsible Person:</b> Bursar <b>Last Review Date:</b> July 2024 <b>Next Review Date:</b> July 2025</p>
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In all AHS Policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word “parent” imports the meaning parent, guardian, carer or any other person in whom is vested the legal duties and responsibilities of a child’s primary caregiver.

If you require a copy of this document in large print, braille or audio format, please contact the AHS Office.

**AHS employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure compliance is met and best practice is implemented:**

**Peninsula HR Online**  
**Peninsula Business Safe (Health and Safety)**  
**Care Check (DBS)**  
**Educare (online CPD)**

## Introduction

Abingdon House School and College is owned and operated by Cavendish Education; the Proprietary Body also known as the Governing Body. Any reference to Governors means any Director of Cavendish Education.

This Policy document is one of a series of AHS Policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive, formal Statement of AHSs aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each and every one of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures being put into place to achieve this. Accordingly, this Policy needs to be read alongside all of

these Policies in order to get the full picture and should be read in conjunction with the **Equality Policy**, the **Health and Safety Policy**, the **Promoting British Values Policy** and the **Safeguarding Children & Child Protection Policy** in particular. All of these Policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to evidence the work that the whole School is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its Core Principles:

### **Self-belief/confidence**

**Respect**

**Perseverance**

**Kindness/empathy**

**Independence**

**Resilience**

## **Purpose and Aims**

The safe recruitment of staff is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils. AHS is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This is to be achieved through effective recruitment and retention of competent, motivated staff members who are suited to and competent in their roles.

The School recognises the value of and seeks to achieve a diverse workforce comprising different backgrounds, skills and abilities. As such, it is committed to a recruitment and selection process which is systematic, efficient, effective and equal. In doing so, it upholds its obligations under law and national collective agreements not to discriminate against applicants on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the practice of safe recruitment of staff appointed to the School. It also sets out the minimum requirements to:

- Attract the best possible applicants to vacancies;
- Deter prospective applicants unsuitable for work with children;
- Identify and reject applicants unsuitable for work with children.

## **Recruitment Procedures**

The following procedures and practices are in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff.

### **Stage 1: Advertising and Inviting Applications**

All advertisements for all posts will clearly stipulate the stance adopted by the School by inclusion of the following statement: *'Abingdon House School is committed to safeguarding children and young people'*.

When advertising roles, we will make clear:

- Our school's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- That safeguarding checks will be undertaken;
- The safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role, such as the extent to which the role will involve contact with children;
- Whether or not the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is not exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account

## **Stage 2: Application Pack**

Prospective applicants will be supplied with the following:

- The Abingdon House Application Form which will include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if an applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity);
- A full Job Description and Person Specification; these will include references to the responsibility of all staff for safeguarding and to promote the welfare of students, as well as including suitability to work with children as an essential criteria;
- Further information about Abingdon House School, including its ethos, principles and its Code of Conduct for Staff. The Recruitment Pack will include a statement that stipulates that Abingdon House School is committed to safeguarding children and young people. All post holders are subject to a satisfactory enhanced criminal record check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS);
- A copy of, or link to, our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and our policy on the employment of ex-offenders;
- All applicants must complete the application in full; CVs can be added for support but are not required.

## **Stage 3: Applicant Selection / Short-Listing**

Suitable candidates for the post based on the Job Description and Person Specification and analysis of their application will be shortlisted in consultation with the Headteacher (or a person to whom this has been delegated) and other staff involved in the interview process.

Our shortlisting process will involve at least 2 people and will:

- Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them
- Explore all potential concerns

Once we have shortlisted candidates, we will ask shortlisted candidates to:

- Complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at interview stage. The information we will ask for includes:
  - If they have a criminal history
  - Whether they are included on the barred list
  - Whether they are prohibited from teaching
  - Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales
  - Any relevant overseas information
  - Sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true

In the event of large numbers applying for a particular post, the selection criteria will be further refined so as to select those who have scored most highly against the shortlisting criteria.

Telephone or video interviews may be used at the shortlisting stage to establish suitability for interview, but will not be a substitute for a face-to-face meeting as part of the final selection / interview process.

References will be requested for all shortlisted candidates. If references do not arrive before the time of interview, any job offer will be subject to receipt of satisfactory references (as well as other checks).

### **Stage 4: Interview**

Prior to embarking on the interview process and on point of arrival for the interview, candidates selected for interview will be asked to provide:

- Proof of identity;
- Actual certificates of qualification(s);
- Eligibility to live and work in the UK.

The interview process will seek to assess each candidate in terms of fulfilling the requirements of the post and the questions and tasks will range to encompass knowledge, skills, competence and qualities needed for the particular post.

The school will endeavour to ensure that at least one representative involved in the interview process has undertaken the Safer Recruitment accredited course training.

Candidates will always be required to:

- Explain satisfactorily any gaps in employment;
- Explain satisfactorily any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to the interviewers;
- Declare any information that is likely to appear on a DBS disclosure;

- Demonstrate their capacity to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people.

The school will record all information considered and decisions made.

### **Stage 5: References**

References will be sought directly from the referee. References or testimonials provided by the candidate are never accepted. Open references, *'To Whom It May Concern'* and similar, will not be accepted if they fail to include date evidence or are without obvious authorisation.

Once references are received (electronically), a follow up check will be made as appropriate to verify authenticity.

In all cases of applicants being invited to interview, referees will be contacted by telephone or email in order to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies. A detailed written note will be kept of such exchanges and retained on the personnel file of the individual appointed.

With cases of any anomalies or discrepancies in the application, previous employers who have not been named as referees will be contacted in order to clarify the situation.

When seeking references we will:

- Ensure any references are from the candidate's current employer and completed by a senior person. Where the referee is school based, we will ask for the reference to be confirmed by the Headteacher/principal as accurate in respect to disciplinary investigations
- Obtain verification of the candidate's most recent relevant period of employment if they are not currently employed
- Secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the candidate worked with children if they are not currently working with children
- Compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any inconsistencies with the candidate.

### **Stage 6: Successful Candidate – Pre-Employment Checks**

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the school's single central record (SCR). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals' personnel files. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below. The candidate will be required to provide all of the following prior to taking up the post (if they have not done so already at the interview):

- At least two satisfactory references;
- Verification of the candidate's identity and address;

- A satisfactory Enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity. We will not keep a copy of the certificate for longer than 6 months, but when the copy is destroyed we may still keep a record of the fact that vetting took place, the result of the check and recruitment decision taken;
- If a candidate has been living abroad in the preceding 5 years, confirmation from the embassy of that country/countries that they have not obtained a caution/criminal record whilst living in that country\*;
- Verification of qualifications as required;
- Verification of professional status where required, e.g. GTC registration, QTS status (unless properly exempted);
- Ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to be a teacher or in a senior leadership position (section 128 direction made by the secretary of state);
- Pre-recruitment social media checks are carried out;
- The production of evidence of the right to work within the UK;
- Satisfactory mental and physical fitness declaration where required specifically for the role;
- Self-declaration Form.
- For teaching assistants who may administer our breakfast club provision a check that relevant individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006 will be carried out.

\*If the candidate has come directly from another school position where full vetting checks were carried out the overseas check may not be required.

In addition, the School will carry out an internet search including public social media sites on selected candidates only. This step is a tool to form a part of the bigger picture and no decisions will be based solely on social media screening. In the event that something of concern comes from this search this would be considered by the Safeguarding Team in the first instance and brought to the Headteacher for a decision.

If an enhanced criminal record check is required but the DBS is not available before a person starts work in regulated activity, the Headteacher may allow the member of staff to commence work:

- After a satisfactory check of the barred list if the person will be working in regulated activity.
- If all other relevant checks have been completed satisfactorily.
- Provided that the DBS application has been made in advance.
- With appropriate safeguards taken (for example, loose supervision). The safeguards should be determined through risk assessment.

Where this is the case:

- Confirmation of on-going employment will not be made.
- The safeguards will be reviewed at least every two weeks.
- The person in question is informed of the safeguards in place.

- A note will be added to the single central record and evidence of the measures put in place will be retained.

## Agency and Third-party Staff

We will obtain written notification from any agency or third-party organisation that it has carried out the necessary safer recruitment checks that we would otherwise perform. We will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made. We will require that we see the original DBS certificate before the person starts work whether or not it contains any disclosure.

## Contractors

We will ensure that any contractor, or any employee of the contractor, who is to work at the school has had the appropriate level of DBS check. This will be:

- An enhanced DBS check with barred list information for contractors engaging in regulated activity
- An enhanced DBS check, not including barred list information, for all other contractors who are not in regulated activity but whose work provides them with an opportunity for regular contact with children

We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors.

We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months.

Contractors who have not had any checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity under any circumstances.

We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the school.

## Volunteers

We will:

- Never leave an unchecked volunteer unsupervised or allow them to work in regulated activity.
- Obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity.
- Carry out a risk assessment to identify what checks we feel we need to undertake (e.g. references, interview, etc.) and to decide whether to seek an enhanced DBS check without barred list information for any volunteers not engaging in regulated activity. We will retain a record of this risk assessment.

Where a volunteer will be engaging in regulated activity we will carry out all usual pre-recruitment checks.

## Visiting Speakers

For visiting speakers an internet search will be carried out in advance. For the duration of their visit they will always be supervised. We reserve the right to ask to see any presentations in advance.

## Staff Induction

All staff that are new to AHS are required to undertake Induction Training, which will include the school's Safeguarding Policies and specific induction in Child Protection, Anti-Bullying and guidance on Safe Working Practices.

Regular meetings will be held during the first twelve months of employment between the new staff and their appropriate Line Manager(s).

## Leaving Employment of the School

There is a statutory requirement for the provision of the Protection of Children Act to be applied where employees work in the provision of care services to children.

Employees at the school who are dismissed, who resign in circumstances which may have led to dismissal, or where a disciplinary transfer has occurred on the grounds of misconduct which harmed or placed a child at risk of harm will be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service; if the employee is a teacher they will be referred to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).

## Central Record of Recruitment and Vetting

The school will maintain a Central Record of Recruitment and Vetting Checks (Single Central Record), in line with the DfE requirements (see below). It will include:

- All staff who are employed to work at the School;
- All staff who are regularly employed as supply staff to the School whether employed directly by the School or through an agency;
- All others who have been chosen by the School to work in regular contact with children;
- Any other people brought into the School to provide regular additional teaching or coaching instruction for students but who are not staff members, e.g. a specialist sports coach.



Abingdon House School will:

- Require staff who are convicted or cautioned for any offence during their employment with the school to notify the Headteacher in writing of the offence and penalty;
- Respond to changes in legislation required to ensure the safeguarding of children and review policy and practice in the light of developments, for instance Disclosure and Barring Service;
- Carry out a review of this Policy irrespective of legislation, every year;
- For the purposes of creating the record of checks for supply staff provided through a supply agency, the School will request written confirmation from the supply agency that it has satisfactorily completed all relevant checks. Access to the check is only required where there is information contained in the DBS Disclosure. Information disclosed as part of a DBS Disclosure will be treated as confidential. Identity checks will be carried out by the school to confirm that the individual arriving is the individual whom the agency has referred;
- For the purposes of creating the record of checks for peripatetic staff (for music, sports, etc.) the school will require all necessary checks and DBS requirements are fulfilled;
- Where volunteers are likely to have regular, ongoing and unsupervised access to students, the appropriate checks listed above will be undertaken;
- The school will ensure that the terms of any contract with a contractor or agency requires them to adopt and implement measures described in this procedure.

## Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Abingdon House School will not unfairly discriminate against any applicant for employment based on conviction or other details disclosed. The school makes appointment decisions based on merit and ability. If an applicant has a criminal record, this will not automatically bar them from employment with the school. Each case will be decided on its merits in accordance with the objective assessment criteria.

All positions within the school are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. All applicants must therefore declare all previous convictions and cautions, including those which would normally be considered "spent" except those received for an offence committed in the United Kingdom if it has been filtered in accordance with the DBS filtering rules.

A failure to disclose a previous conviction (which should be declared) may lead to an application being rejected or, if the failure to disclose is discovered after employment has started, may lead to summary dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct. A failure to disclose a previous conviction may also amount to a criminal offence.

It is unlawful for the school to employ anyone who is barred from working with children. It is a criminal offence for any person who is barred from working with children to apply for a position at the school.

All applicants for all jobs are required to declare any convictions and cautions as part of the application process.

All appointed staff are made aware during the Induction Process of their obligation to inform the school of any cautions or convictions that arise subsequent to any checks.

Abingdon House School will make a report to the Police and / or the DBS if:

- It receives an application from a barred person;
- It is provided with false information in, or in support of an applicant's application;
- It has serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with children.

### **Assessment Criteria**

In the event that relevant information (whether in relation to previous convictions or otherwise) is volunteered by an applicant during the recruitment process or obtained through a disclosure check, the school will consider the following factors before reaching a recruitment decision:

- Whether the conviction or other matter revealed is relevant to the position in question;
- The seriousness of any offence or other matter revealed;
- The length of time since the offence or other matter occurred;
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour or other relevant matters;
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour or other relevant matters; and
- The circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation(s) offered by the applicant.

If the post involves regular contact with or access to children, it is the school's normal policy to consider it a high risk to employ anyone who has been convicted at any time of any the following offences: murder, manslaughter, rape, other serious sexual offences, grievous bodily harm or other serious acts of violence; or serious class A drug related offences, robbery, burglary, theft, deception or fraud.

If the post involves access to money or budget responsibility, it is the school's normal policy to consider it a high risk to employ anyone who has been convicted at any time of robbery, burglary, theft, deception or fraud.

If the post involves driving responsibilities, it is the School's normal policy to consider it a high risk to employ anyone who has been convicted of drink driving or other equivalent driving offence within the last ten years.

### **Assessment Procedure**

Where an applicant discloses conviction(s) before interview, interviewers must establish the facts during the interview and, if necessary or appropriate, arrange to investigate the matter further.

Where conviction(s) are not disclosed prior to interview, the candidate will either be i) discounted or ii) called to a further interview at which the facts will be established. Subsequent to this, all of the risk factors must be evaluated before a position is offered or confirmed.

If a DBS Certificate reveals any convictions, the person concerned will be invited to attend an interview with the Head of HR to discuss the conviction(s) and circumstances. Following this meeting a risk assessment will be carried out and a decision made and communicated back to the person concerned. For safer recruitment purposes, until this decision has been made the applicant will not commence employment.

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

In the event that relevant information (whether in relation to previous convictions or otherwise) is volunteered by an applicant during the recruitment process or is obtained through a disclosure check, the school will carry out a risk assessment (see Appendix 1) by reference to the criteria set out above. The risk assessment form must be signed off by the Bursar before a position is offered or confirmed. The risk assessment form is to be permanently retained on the relevant staff file.

### **Data Protection Issues**

Employees are entitled to see and receive, if requested, copies of their employment references.

Further disclosed information will be treated in confidence and not used against applicants unfairly, including adherence to the current statutory code of practice.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Bursar will monitor the policy in liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and will report annually to the Headteacher on the progress of the policy.

This document is based on current best practice.

## Appendix 1

### Risk Assessment for Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Name of applicant:

Name of person responsible for processing this Risk Assessment:

Date of Risk Assessment:

	Event	Action	Profile
1	An applicant volunteers information on a former offence	Confirm this information via relevant check(s). Log the details in the "Profile" cell (right). <b>Consider line 2, or go to the EV lines below.</b>	
2	Ignoring the issue of the previous offence [ref Line 1 above], the candidate would be seriously considered for appointment	Cross-check the volunteered information against the DBS report, and detail the correspondence (or otherwise) of the accounts in the "Profile" cell (right). <b>Go to line 3.</b>	
3	An applicant's name appears on a barred list. OR An applicant's DBS shows a previous offence which had not been declared by him/her, and he/she admits trying to conceal the offence. OR The school has serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with children.	<b>If any of this line applies, the application is discarded.</b> Consider referring the case to the police / DBS; record these deliberations and their outcome. Referral is the usual outcome in these cases. Log the details in the "Profile" cell (right). <b>If none of this line applies, go to line 4.</b>	
4	An applicant's DBS shows up a previous offence which had not been declared by him/her, but there is a fully justified and evidenced explanation of the non-declaration.	Log the details in the "Profile" cell (right). <b>Go to the EV lines below</b> <b>If there is a dispute with the DBS, go to line 5.</b>	
5	An applicant's DBS shows up a previous offence which had not been declared by him/her, he/she disputes the DBS record and is to dispute it with DBS.	<b>EITHER discard the application</b> and then record the decision and its rationale in the "Profile" cell (right). <b>OR</b> as a matter of absolute discretion, <b>defer a final decision</b> about the appointment until the applicant has	

		had a reasonable opportunity to challenge the disclosure information with the DBS and then, if appropriate, go to Line 4. Log the details in the "Profile" cell (right).	
6	Complete, review and annotate the EV "Profile" cells below.		
7	<p>Assess the risk posed by the applicant, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● against each criterion, use the following evaluation categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>High:</b> there is an expectation that the offence concerned may be repeated OR the nature of the offence concerned poses an unacceptable risk within the school</li> <li>○ <b>Medium:</b> while there is not a specific expectation that the offence concerned may be repeated, there is a concern that the school should not engage in the potential risk presented</li> <li>○ <b>Low:</b> the risk with the applicant involved is not substantively different from the risk from other (non-involved) applicants</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Where a "High" or "Medium" risk is identified in <b>any</b> area of the assessment, then the application must be discarded and due (and recorded) consideration must be given to referral(s).</li> <li>● Where <b>all</b> areas of the assessment identify a "Low" risk as defined, the application should be processed in the usual way, which may or may not result in appointment.</li> <li>● If an assessed "Low" risk applicant is appointed, the risk must be formally reviewed (and recorded on file) annually for the first five years after appointment.</li> </ul>		
EV	Evaluation process (complete each relevant "Profile" cell)		Profile (include your assessment of High / Medium / Low Risk)
EVA	Is the conviction or other matter revealed relevant to the position in question?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low
EVB	What is the seriousness of any offence or other matter revealed?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low
EVC	What is the length of time since the offence or other matter occurred, and what is the implication of that length of time?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low
EVD	Is there any indication that the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour or other relevant matters?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low
EVE	Have the applicant's circumstances changed since the offending behaviour or other relevant matters in a way that impacts on the recruitment deliberation?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low
EVF	What were the circumstances surrounding the offence or incident, and what explanation(s) has the applicant offered?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low
EVG	Does the post involve regular access to and/or contact with children where there is a relevant offence?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low

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EVH	Does the post involve access to money or budget responsibility where there is a relevant offence?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low
EVI	Does the post involve driving responsibilities where there is a relevant offence?	(complete the "Profile" cell right)	High / Medium / Low