



Hamwic Education Trust

Safer Recruitment Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Hamwic Education Trust (HET's) approach to the recruitment process. It includes information about job descriptions and employee specifications, assessment criteria, interviews and equity, diversity and inclusion.

HET is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and we expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

2. Elements of safer practice

Safer practice in recruitment means thinking about and including issues to do with child protection and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children at every stage of the process. It starts by planning the recruitment exercise and requires a consistent and thorough process of obtaining, collating, analysing and evaluating information from and about applicants. Safer practice continues beyond recruitment and requires everyone to be vigilant to maintain an environment which deters and prevents abuse and challenges inappropriate behaviour. HET follows Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance updated and published annually by the DfE.

Employees and governors/trustees involved in the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers are responsible for reading and complying with this policy.

2.1 Main elements of the recruitment process

The main elements of the recruitment process include but are not limited to the following:

- Ensuring that advertisements, job descriptions and person specifications refer to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; the safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role; our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; and whether the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and relevant Exemptions Order.
- Advertisements should also refer to the need for the successful applicant to undertake the relevant safer recruitment pre-employment checks, as well as the usual details of the post, salary, qualifications required, etc.
- Including a specific reference to suitability to work with children in the person specification;
- Where the role involves engaging in regulated activity, a clear statement to applicants that it is an offence to apply for the role if the applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.
- Requesting applicants who are shortlisted to complete a self-declaration of any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children.
- Obtaining and scrutinising comprehensive information from applicants to determine their suitability and taking up and resolving any discrepancies or anomalies.
- Obtaining independent professional references that answer specific questions to help assess an applicant's suitability to work with children and following up any concerns, having regard to KCSIE guidance on references.
- A face to face interview that explores the candidate's suitability to work with children as well as their suitability for the post; and
- Conducting all pre-employment checks, as required and detailed below.

An Applicant Tracking System is used by HET to support recruitment activities.

2.2 Assessment criteria

HET always aims to recruit the person who is most suited to each particular job. Recruitment is solely on the basis of the applicant's abilities and individual merit as measured against the predetermined criteria for the job. Qualifications, experience and skills are assessed at the level that is relevant to the job.

2.3 Job descriptions and employee specifications

Before initiating the recruitment process, the responsible individual must ensure that there is an up-to-date job description for the role and a clear employee specification.

The job description will include the duties, responsibilities, level of seniority associated with the role and pay and benefits, while the employee specification will describe the type of qualifications, training, knowledge, experience, skills, aptitudes, competencies and personal qualities required for effective performance of the job.

2.4 Advertisement of vacancies

It is HET's policy that all external vacancies are placed on the School and Trust website and in the appropriate chosen forms of media. This may include Dorset for You, Hantsweb, TES, with the Government's [Find a job service](#)/through an employment agency/on LinkedIn/on Twitter/TES etc.

Line managers should encourage existing employees to apply for vacant posts if they have the appropriate qualifications, experience and skills.

All advertisements will have the following statement about safeguarding children and young people and the requirement to have a DBS check:

'[Name of school] is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils and expects all those working at the [school] to share this commitment. We will ensure that all our recruitment and selection practices reflect this commitment. All successful candidates will be subject to disclosure and barring service checks along with other relevant employment checks'.

2.5 Equity, diversity and inclusion

HET is committed to applying its equality, diversity and inclusion policy at all stages of recruitment and selection. HET always carries out shortlisting, interviewing and selection without regard to an applicant's sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, skin colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity leave or trade union membership.

HET will never exclude any candidate with a disability unless it is clear that the candidate is unable to perform a duty that is intrinsic to the role, having taken into account reasonable adjustments. Individuals involved with recruitment must only ask a candidate questions about their health where this is directly necessary for a particular role and, in any event, only once they have been shortlisted.

To prevent any candidate from being disadvantaged because of a disability, when a candidate is invited to interview, they are asked if they require reasonable adjustments to be made to enable them to participate in the interview and selection process. These may include for example ensuring easy access to the premises for an interview, providing a suitable chair for an interview with a candidate suffering from back problems etc.

3. Application Form

All applicants need to complete the HET application form in full which can be found on the Trust's website. CV's will not be accepted.

4. Shortlisting

All applications will be considered by at least two appropriate senior members of staff to ensure that:

- They are fully and properly completed.
- The information provided is consistent.
- The information provided does not contain any discrepancies or inconsistencies.
- Any gaps in employment are identified; and
- Any potential concerns are identified and explored.

Incomplete applications will not be accepted and will be returned for completion.

As well as reasons for gaps in employment, the reasons for a history of repeated changes of employment without any clear career or salary progression, or a mid-career move from a permanent post to supply teaching or temporary work, will also be noted and will need to be explored and verified during the later stages of the process.

All candidates will be assessed equally against the criteria contained in the person specification and a short-list will be drawn up.

Shortlisted candidates will be asked to complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, and will be asked to sign a declaration confirming that the information they have provided is true. The purpose of a self-declaration is so that candidates will have the opportunity to share relevant information and allow this to be discussed and considered at interview before the DBS certificate is received.

5. References

The purpose of seeking references is to obtain objective and factual information to support appointment decisions. At least 2 references will be sought directly from referees for all short-listed candidates, including internal candidates.

Wherever possible, these will be obtained before the interview so that any issues of concern can be explored further with the referee and taken up with the candidate at interview.

One referee should be the applicant's current or most recent employer. If the applicant has previously worked or volunteered with children, one reference must be from the most recent employer or organisation.

References should always be requested directly from the referee and from a senior person with appropriate authority, not just a colleague.

Upon receipt, references should be checked to ensure that all specific questions have been answered satisfactorily. Verbal contact is to be made with the referee who is the current or most recent employer to confirm that their reference is authentic and to clarify any points in the reference that are vague or unspecific. Where there are vague or unspecific points in other references then these should also be verbally checked. In the case of volunteers then a verbal check should be made with at least one referee.

In relation to support staff roles, references will be sought prior to interview, where possible.

All information should be compared with the application form to ensure that the information provided about the candidate and their previous employment by the referee is consistent with the information provided by the applicant on the form. Any discrepancy in the information should be taken up with the applicant at the interview.

Any information about past disciplinary action or allegations should be considered in the circumstances of the individual case.

6. Other checks before interview

If a short-listed applicant claims to have a specific qualification or previous experience that is particularly relevant to the post for which they are applying that will not be verified by a reference, it is good practice to verify the facts before interview so that any discrepancy can be explored at interview. The qualification or experience can usually be verified quickly by telephoning the relevant previous employer and asking for written confirmation of the qualification and/or experience.

7. Invite to interview and assessment

Where an applicant has provided an email address the invitation to attend interview will be sent by email, via HET's Applicant Tracking System operated via Strictly Education, and where an applicant has indicated that they are not able to access email a letter will be sent. Interview invites will always contain the following:

- Date, time/s and venue for interview and assessment
- Directions to the venue
- The names and positions of panel members / assessors
- An outline of what to expect and details of any preparatory work that may need to be undertaken
- A request that a named person is notified within a specified timescale if the candidate requires any reasonable adjustments to be made, to enable them to attend and fully participate in the interview and assessment process
- A Disclosure of Criminal Record Form, to be completed, sealed in an envelope marked private and confidential and brought to interview

A request that the following documents are brought to interview

- Original copies of qualifications declared as part of the application
- Two of the following: Birth Certificate, valid Passport or Driving Licence; and
- A recent utilities bill or other form of verification of current address

8. Interview Panel

A panel of at least two people will conduct the interview. This allows at least one member to observe and assess the candidate and make notes, while the candidate is talking to the other panel member/s. At least one member of the panel must have received accredited training in Safer Recruitment. For school leader recruitment, the interview panel would typically consist of a school leader and governor from the partnership, senior member of the team and 3 members of the school Governing Body. The CEO would typically attend on day 2 of the interview process for School Leaders.

9. Interviews

The interview process will assess the merits of each candidate against the job description and person specification. All interviewers should receive copies of the full application form, letter of application and any available written references for each candidate prior to interview.

A list of questions and matters to explore at interview should be created for each candidate prior to interview. This list will not be exhaustive. Assessment sheets may be used and questions relating to safeguarding and child protection will be asked.

In addition, the interview panel should also explore:

- The candidate's attitude towards, and motivation for working with, children.
- Their ability to support the school's ethos which naturally encompasses safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Gaps in the candidate's employment history or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently.
- Concerns or discrepancies arising from the information provided by the candidate and/or a referee and/or from online checks; and
- If the candidate wishes to declare anything in light of the requirement for a DBS check.
- If references are not obtained before the interview, the candidate should be asked at the interview if there is anything they wish to declare/discuss in light of the questions that have been (or will be) put to their referees.
- The candidate's suitability for the role.

All interview records will be held securely and for six months' post interview, all information for unsuccessful candidates will be confidentially disposed of.

Observing short-listed candidates' interaction with pupils is part of the interviewing process for teaching posts and procedures will vary according to the vacancy.

9.1 Conditional offers of employment/engagement and pre-employment checks

All offers of employment/engagement are conditional and are subject to:

- Verification of identity using photo ID and proof of address.
- Verification of right to work in the UK.
- Overseas checks where required (including but not limited to criminal records checks for overseas applicants and a letter (via the applicant) from the professional regulating authority (this is often the Department/Ministry of Education but varies across the world) in the country (or countries) in which the applicant has worked confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions, and or that they are aware of any reason why they may be unsuitable to teach). As a minimum overseas checks will be undertaken in respect of any person that has been in a country outside of the UK for a period of 3 months or more during the last five years, and additional checks required at the School/Trust's discretion.
- Verification of mental and physical fitness to carry out the role. This is ascertained via the completion of a confidential Occupational Health questionnaire, and where required a medical examination carried out by the Trust's Occupational Health provider.
- The receipt of at least two references which are satisfactory to the Trust. The Trust reserves the right to request further or alternative references from applicants in order to verify their suitability for employment.

- Verification of qualifications including Qualified Teacher Status and completion of statutory induction where required.

Conditional offers of employment must only be confirmed once all pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed.

Contracts of employment must be given to the individual on or before their first day of work. It is important, therefore, that pre-employment checks are carried out as soon as possible.

9.2 Online searches

Online searches will be carried out on successful candidates as part of the safer recruitment due diligence process.

Candidates will be notified that they will be subject to an online check and that anything of concern will be discussed with them post interview. An online check will consist of a search on the candidate's name, location and current employer, and may include social media platforms, including but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn.]

If incidents or issues that are publicly available online in relation to the successful candidate are identified, this may be explored with the applicant.

10. Barred List and Enhanced DBS Clearance

Once received by the applicant, the original DBS certificate must be shown to one of the designated persons at the relevant school. In the event that a DBS certificate contains information, schools should use the Trust's DBS risk assessment available on the Manual of Personnel Practice and contact made with the HET HR team for further guidance.

Any failure to meet the conditions specified will result in an offer of employment/engagement being withdrawn.

If any candidate is found to be prohibited or disqualified from working with children and young people, to have provided false information or where serious concerns arise, HET will comply with its obligations to report these matters to the Police and DBS as required.

Information regarding pre-employment checks will be recorded on the relevant school's Single Central Record, and copies of documents retained on the individual's personnel file in accordance with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and as stated in HET's Policy on the secure handling of information provided by the DBS and Data Protection Policy.

10.1 Agency staff

In the case of agency staff, schools must ensure that the arrangement with the agency imposes an obligation on the agency to carry out all recruitment checks as set out above, including DBS and children's barred list checks, that the school would otherwise complete for its staff. The school must obtain written confirmation from the agency that these checks have been carried out and are satisfactory. This must be recorded in the single central record (SCR).

11. Delays in obtaining Criminal Record Disclosure or Overseas Checks

In wholly exceptional circumstances as determined by HET a prospective employee or worker may be allowed to commence work prior to satisfactory Criminal Record Disclosure and/or relevant overseas checks having been received.

No prospective employee or worker will be allowed to commence work before ALL other pre-employment checks have been completed, and where it is identified that a prospective employee or worker will commence work prior to the above:

A risk assessment must be undertaken using HET's DBS risk assessment available on the Manual of Personnel Practice. The form must be fully completed and signed by the School Leader and responsible line manager; and the prospective employee or worker must be appropriately supervised at all times.

12. Induction and probation

On-going vigilance and training is critical to establishing a robust safeguarding culture. There is an induction programme for all teaching and non-teaching staff appointed to HET regardless of previous experience, which includes online and face to face child protection training and assessment. The purpose of induction is to:

- Provide training and information about HET's policies and procedures including those in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people.
- Establish clear expectations regarding the standards of conduct, behaviour and performance required.
- Ensure staff know when and how to raise any safeguarding concerns, including low level concerns.
- Facilitate the identification of any concerns regarding conduct, behaviour or performance, and enable support to be provided to achieve the standards required.
- Provide opportunities for staff to discuss any issues or concerns they may have regarding their role or responsibilities.

13. Data protection

HET processes all personal data collected during the recruitment process in accordance with our Data Protection policy.

Personal data from applicants during the recruitment process is not collected unnecessarily. For example, bank account details and next-of-kin contact details will only be collected from successful applicants. Data collected as part of the recruitment process is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing the recruitment exercise effectively to decide to whom to offer the job. Employees should report immediately any inappropriate access or disclosure of job applicant data in accordance with HET's data protection policy. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the Disciplinary policy.

Links to other policies and documents:

- Employee handbook
- Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance
- Code of conduct guidance
- Disciplinary policy
- Grievance policy
- Fitness and suitability for work guidance
- Overseas criminal records guidance
- DBS guidance