

Safer Recruitment Policy

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Purpose

RBET Norfolk is committed to ensuring that all children accessing our provision remain safe. A key element of this commitment is our policy and practice regarding the recruitment and retention of staff, trustees and volunteers.

Scope

This policy governs the appointment of all RBET Norfolk employees (permanent and temporary) and volunteers (including governors).

Policy statement and provision

Responsibility for implementation

The DSL (designated safeguarding lead) and nominated governor are responsible for ensuring good safe recruitment practice, i.e. that no 'unsuitable' person is employed by RBET Norfolk or works as a governor or volunteer.

Statutory requirements

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) established the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) to make decisions about individuals who should be barred from working with children and to maintain a list of these individuals. The Protection of Freedoms Act (2012) merged the ISA with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to form a single, new, non-departmental public body called the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) it is an offence for an employer to knowingly employ someone in a regulated position if that person is barred from such work. It is also an offence for the individual who has been barred to apply for a regulated position (one which involves spending regular time working with children).

The Protection of Freedoms Act (2012) reduced the scope of 'regulated activity' by focusing on whether the work is unsupervised (in which case it counts as 'regulated activity') or supervised. The new definition of regulated activity came into force on 10 September 2012 and was issued in conjunction with guidance on the level of supervision required to take work out of the scope of regulated activity.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) also imposed the legal requirement on employers to refer to the ISA (now DBS) information about employees or volunteers who (may) have harmed children while working for them.

In 2013 (updated on numerous occasions, most recently September 2024) the DfE issued further statutory guidance: 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Compliance with this guidance (for independent schools) is required under section 157 of the 2002 Education Act.

Practice

As required within this statutory guidance, RBET Norfolk will ensure that it "operates safe recruitment procedures including making sure that statutory duties to check staff who work with children are complied with and statutory guidance relating to volunteers is followed" ... and, "that proportionate decisions are taken on whether to require any checks beyond that and recruitment panel members are properly trained".

Safe recruitment trained staff

The safe recruitment trained staff at RBET Norfolk are Louise Fisher and Ellie Rix.

RBET Norfolk will ensure that in pursuing safe recruitment procedures it does not discriminate against anyone for reasons of disability. In accordance with the 2010 Equality Act we will do all that we can to ensure any applicants with a disability suffer no discrimination whatsoever, and that, should they be appointed, they are supported to carry out their duties effectively (See Disability and Discrimination Policy).

RBET Norfolk will ensure that no person who is known to pose a risk of harm to children engages in any 'regulated activity' or is engaged by the organisation in any role regardless of whether that role involves engagement in regulated activity.

Regulated activity is defined as 'having the opportunity for contact with children', specifically through:

- teaching, training, caring or supervising young people to include all work carried out within a school;
- providing advice or guidance on the wellbeing of young people;
- driving a vehicle that is being used solely for the purpose of transporting young people.

Checks on new staff

DfE regulations for schools contain a statutory duty that schools must obtain a barred list check with an enhanced criminal records check for newly appointed staff. The DBS check is only statutorily required for staff who within the three months before their appointment have not worked in:

- a school in England in a post which brought them into regular contact with children or any post they were appointed to since 12 May 2006;
- an FE college in England in a position which involved the provision of education and regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children or young people under the age of 18...

but, whilst an employee may begin employment, RBET Norfolk practice is that, unless the DBS is portable, a new DBS will be applied for and a barred list check will always be carried out (even for staff transferring from current employment in regulated activity).

KCSiE (Sept 2024) states that: "There are certain circumstances where schools and colleges may obtain an enhanced DBS certificate (not including barred list information), for volunteers who are not engaging in regulated activity. This is set out in DBS workforce guides, which can be found on GOV.UK. Employers are not legally permitted to request barred list information on a supervised volunteer as they are not considered to be engaged in regulated activity".

All documentation utilised to check a successful candidate's identity, right to work and required qualifications will be copied and those copies will be kept in the candidate's staff file as required by 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2024.

Recruitment procedure

Advertising

- Careful consideration should be given to the advert for the role. Adverts must be attractive, engaging and exciting for the reader whilst at all times being truthful and honest. The advert should contain such details as location, summary of the role, pay band/grade and how to apply.
- Suitable discussion must be had and recorded to show where the advert will be placed. Consideration should be given to whether to just use free recruitment sites or whether to pay for the adverts to potentially attract a broader range of candidates.
- Adverts must steer clear of any wording the person leading the recruitment process is unsure about or thinks might be open to legal challenge. Apart from the few lawful exemptions and exceptions, the advertisement must not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- No one should ever be appointed just on the basis of their CV. Application forms must be completed by each person wishing to be considered for a role within RBET Norfolk.
- The application process should be clear and concise and easy to follow, making effective use of such things as job descriptions, candidate briefing papers, supporting letter from the Head of Centre, annual reports and the RBET Norfolk website. Care should be given to ensuring the accuracy and veracity of all aspects of the advert.
- Wherever possible, all vacancies will be advertised simultaneously both internally (in all Centres and on the relevant RBET Norfolk website) and externally. Steps will be taken to ensure that knowledge of vacancies reaches under-represented groups.
- All vacancy advertisements will include an appropriate statement on equality and diversity.

Longlisting

- All equalities and monitoring forms must be removed and filed separately before any longlisting occurs.
- For roles attracting a large number of applicants, usually viewed as 40 or more, a longlisting process can be used to sift the initial tranche of application forms. This process can include such criteria as whether the form was completed correctly, the presence of spelling mistakes, an overly short personal statement section or failure to return all of the required forms. This process can be omitted if applicant numbers are manageable.

Shortlisting

- Shortlisting will consist of those involved in the recruitment process matching each candidate to the job specification through the use of a grid. Once everyone has completed the grid, the candidates to be invited for interview will be selected.
- No more than seven candidates will be interviewed in a single day.
- The shortlisting group must ensure that any gaps in employment are noted and that the reason(s) for the gap(s) is / are explored at interview.

Post shortlisting and pre-interview

NB All applicants / potential applicants will be notified that online checks /searches may be carried out as part of due diligence checks.

All shortlisted candidates will be contacted and invited to interview. Candidates that have not been shortlisted should be contacted to say that they have been unsuccessful. The interview panel, together with the HR team should decide if just an interview on its own will provide enough information for them to choose the right candidate(s). Consideration should be given to the use of one or more of the following:

- a presentation by the candidate to the panel;
- a written exercise to be completed at interview;
- an observed lesson/programme;
- a psychometric test;
- a group exercise;
- an in-tray/time management exercise;
- any other suitable test or method to gain valuable insights into the candidate's ability to deliver on the role.

All candidates must receive any relevant paperwork regarding the interview process and what will be expected of them, in a timely and accurate manner. The HR team and recruiting staff must be careful to avoid any jargon or wording which only an existing staff member would understand.

A suitable list of questions should be written to ensure the candidates are able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, attitude and experience to be successful in post. The questions should cover a range of topics and scenarios specific to the advertised role and **MUST** contain at least one safeguarding question.

Any issues noted on a DBS check must be explored.

A pack containing all shortlisted application forms and relevant applicant details should be produced for each panel member. This should also include a blank questions template onto which the candidates' answers are recorded. Best practice is that notes taken from an interview are handwritten and not input onto a laptop.

Interview

The interview panel must consist of at least two, but ideally three, staff members or governors. One of the panel **MUST** be trained in safe recruitment. A suitable introduction should be given by one of the panel to ensure each candidate is aware of the process and how the interview will be conducted, alongside standard safety/fire safety instructions.

Each member of the panel should use their question template to record the candidates' answers. Panel members should not write down any scores to questions whilst with any candidate. Care should be taken to shield the questions from the candidates. Each candidate should not be able to see any paperwork about any other candidates.

Candidates should be given the chance to ask their own questions at the end of the interview. They should also be told what the next steps are and when they are likely to hear the outcome of their interview.

Panel members must pursue the reason for any gaps in an applicant's working history.

Appointment

All interviewed candidates should be contacted with their outcome - ideally the successful candidate first. This allows for a regrouping and reconsideration of other candidates if the successful person turns down the offer.

Pre-employment checks

Any offer of employment will be made subject to the satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks. The chair of the interviewing panel will ensure that the following actions are pursued:

- Verify the candidate's identity - photographic ID and proof of address should be seen except where, for exceptional reasons, none is available - the DBS requires that a person's identity has been properly verified for the purposes of an application for an enhanced criminal records check.
- Check (prior to appointment) that the qualifications required for the post are held by the applicant.
- Verify the person's right to work in the UK - if there is uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission, then the UK Border Agency's immigration enquiry bureau at UKBApublicenquiries@ukba.gsi.gov.uk will be contacted.
- If the disclosure is not considered sufficient to establish suitability to work in a school (because it would not cover offences committed abroad, but only those on the police national computer), seek whatever evidence of checking is available from the person's country of origin (or any other countries in which they have resided) before the appointment is made. There is no definite specification as to how long the applicant would need to have lived outside the UK for such checks to be sought... but the NSPCC advises three months, and RBET Norfolk will follow that advice (NB The Home Office has published updated guides on what checks are available from different countries - a UK national returning after working in a foreign country should be asked to obtain a certificate of good conduct or equivalent from the country in question - extra references should be requested for applicants from countries which do not provide criminal record checks).
- Access an enhanced DBS check.
- Verify the candidate's medical fitness - it is the statutory responsibility of employers to satisfy themselves that individuals have the appropriate level of physical and mental fitness before an appointment offer is confirmed. Potential appointees will be asked to complete a form asserting they are physically and mentally able to meet the requirements of the post for which they have applied. It is essential that the medical fitness form is completed, returned to and checked by the appropriate member of RBET Norfolk staff before the candidate is allowed to start work or engage in regulated activity.
- Ensure a prohibition check is pursued - QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) is not a requirement for teachers in the independent sector, but schools must now check that anyone employed to carry out teaching work is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State - the check is completed via the secure access portal on the 'Teacher Services' webpage, and can be undertaken on individuals who do not have QTS by searching by name on the list of banned people (this applies to those appointed to teach on or after 1 April 2012). Any prohibition from work made by the now defunct GTCE (General teaching Council for England) remains current and

any person who has been subject to disciplinary proceedings by that body will not be considered for work within the organisation.

The above checks will be completed before a person takes up a position. An enhanced disclosure must be obtained before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment. Pending arrival of an enhanced disclosure, the proprietor of the Centre has the discretion to employ the person with appropriate safeguards, provided those safeguards (e.g. supervision) are clearly stated, the postholder is informed of the safeguards and they are reviewed at fortnightly intervals. A note must be placed on the SCR to this effect.

References will always be sought prior to appointment. KCSiE (Sept 2024) states that: “The purpose of seeking references is to obtain objective and factual information to support appointment decisions. References should always be obtained and scrutinised and any concerns resolved satisfactorily, before the appointment is confirmed, including internal candidates”.

Two references will be taken up, ideally before the interview, including a request for any reason why the applicant should not be employed for work with children. If a reference is taken over the telephone, detailed notes will be taken, dated and signed. A subsequent hard copy will also be requested. References will be read on receipt to check that all specific questions have been answered satisfactorily, with appropriate follow-up where required. References not received in good time before appointment will be chased by telephone and alternative referees sought if needed.

References sent by email should come from a business account. If the provider does not have access to a business account uses a personal ‘server’ (e.g. they may be retired), then telephone calls will be made to ascertain the legitimacy of the provider and the reference.

Should a reference (or references) arrive after the interview and indicate gaps in service that have not been discussed at interview, or any other issue that requires further interrogation, then a member of the interviewing panel will meet with the potential appointee to seek confirmation regarding their suitability for appointment.

All posts will be offered initially with a review period. If there are any concerns, particularly of any threat to students’ welfare or safety, then employment may be terminated immediately during that period. If the review is positive, then the employee will move on to a permanent contract providing appropriate employment rights. Were there subsequently to be concerns re practice, they would be dealt with through the charity’s identified processes (see ‘Safeguarding’, ‘Whistleblowing’ and ‘Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff’ policies).

RBET Norfolk will refer anyone who has harmed or is considered to pose a risk of harm to a child and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left, to the DBS. “The legal duty to refer applies equally in circumstances where an individual is deployed to another area of work that is not regulated activity, or they are suspended” (KCSiE Sept 2024).

Staff in a management position will be checked to ensure that they are not barred from holding a management position. The regulations state that this applies to:

- headteachers,
- staff on the leadership team (including non-teaching staff),
- teaching posts with departmental leadership.

Procedures applied to governors

The chair of governors, together with all full members of the Governing Body, will be subject to an enhanced DBS check. Checks will be carried out prior to appointment, or as soon as practicable after appointment.

Any new governor will be checked against the new 'prohibition from management' list: It is noted that, "A section 128 direction also prohibits a person from taking up a position as governor (trustee) of a maintained school" (KCSiE Sept 2024).

Procedures for agency staff

RBET Norfolk will always seek written notification from any agency provider that they have carried out the checks required by DfE regulations (identity, enhanced disclosure, right to work in the UK, DBS check, prohibition, qualifications, overseas checks, plus, in line with KCSiE advice, two references, declaration of medical fitness, check of previous employment history). An entry will be made on the SCR to indicate that these checks have been made. Regardless of assurances from an agency that a DBS check has been carried out, we will always require direct sight of the person's DBS check.

Procedures for volunteers

KCSiE (Sept 2024) advises that, "schools and colleges may choose to carry out an enhanced DBS check, without barred list information, in certain circumstances". Given the nature of the RBET Norfolk student cohort we will always seek an enhanced DBS check in respect of volunteers.

In addition, the Headteacher (or a member of staff to whom that responsibility is delegated) will undertake a risk assessment and utilise their professional judgement and experience to decide whether further checks should be sought in the case of all volunteers.

Instances where students are to be supervised by staff from another organisation:

In any such circumstance the DSL will seek proof from the other organisation, be that school or other agency, that appropriate checks have been sought regarding any staff supervising regulated activity.

If another 'provider' (eg activity centre, stables, gymnasium) is to be used, written confirmation must be sought and received and filed from that provider confirming that all staff have been appropriately checked.

RBET Norfolk is fully aware that we remain responsible for the safeguarding arrangements for our students at all times, regardless of whether we place them with other organisations for any period of time.

Contractors working on any site

When contractors are working on-site where RBET Norfolk students are present, the following procedures will be adhered to:

1. DBS Checks: Contractors must have undergone appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. In cases where DBS clearance is not available, strict risk assessments will be conducted. In no circumstances will a contractor be left with a student unsupervised without the relevant level of DBS. The employer must provide assurances that the contractors do not pose any risk to the safety of students.

2. Supervision and Minimal Contact: All efforts will be made to minimise any contact between contractors and students. Contractors will be supervised at all times when in areas where students are present.
3. Incident Protocols: If any concerns arise regarding the behaviour of a contractor, they will be immediately removed from the site. The employer will then be required to provide alternative personnel to complete the work.
4. Responsibility for Safety: Responsibility for maintaining safety rests with the adults managing the environment, not with the students. It is the duty of staff and contractors to uphold safeguarding standards.

The single central register – the legal requirements

Schools must keep a single central record so they have evidence to demonstrate to inspectors that they have carried out the range of checks required by the law. A copy of the documents used to verify the successful candidate's identity, right to work and required qualifications will be kept within a file that is maintained for that member of staff. Schools do not have to keep copies of vetting documents in order to fulfil the duty of maintaining the single central record.

An entry will be made for all current members of staff, the governing body, the proprietor and any individuals who work in regular contact with children including volunteers, supply staff and those employed as third parties.

KCSiE (September 2024) states that the SCR may be kept in paper or electronic format. We will record the SCR electronically, but will ensure it can be printed should inspectors require that.

For independent schools The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations (updated 2019) describe the requirements of the SCR.

Related legislation and documents

Children Act (Gov. UK 1989)

Children Act (Gov. UK 2004)

General Data Protection Regulation - UK UK GDPR (May 2018)

Human Rights Act (Gov. UK 1998)

Education Act (Gov. UK 2002)

Education and Skills Act (Gov. UK 2008)

Sexual Offences Act (Abuse of Trust) (Gov. UK 2003)

Female Genital Mutilation Act (Gov. UK 2003)

Information Sharing; Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (Gov.UK July 2018)

Counter-terrorism and Security Act (Gov.UK 2015)

Keeping Children Safe in Education - KCSiE (Gov.UK Sept 2024)

Revised Prevent Duty Advice for Schools (Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales Gov.UK (July 2015)

Children Missing Education (Gov.UK Sept 2016)

Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers (Gov.UK October 2015)

Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (Gov.UK July 2018)

Other RBET Norfolk policies to be read in conjunction with this one

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Whistleblowing

E-safety

Attendance

Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff

Student Wellbeing and Personal Development

Behaviour for Learning

Anti-Bullying

Staff Code of Conduct

Data Protection