



Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy



The Stour Federation

1. INTRODUCTION

The Stour Federation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and requires all employees and volunteers to demonstrate this commitment in every aspect of their work.

The appointment of all employees will be made on merit and in accordance with the provisions of Employment Law, Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy. Safer recruitment is one strand of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and keeping them safe in education settings.

We will ensure that people are treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political belief or affiliation, trade union membership, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction.

We will comply with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education with regard to DBS and other pre-employment checks.

We will ensure compliance with the Data Protection regulations and the more stringent requirements contained within the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Our Applicants Privacy Notice provides specific details in accordance with the GDPR principles and can be found on the Trust website and school website.

Safer recruitment is not just about employing new people, but about managing existing staff.

2. DELEGATION OF APPOINTMENTS AND CONSTITUTION OF APPOINTMENTS

The power to offer employment for all posts below the level of Assistant Headteacher is delegated to the Headteacher, as per the Trust's Scheme of Delegation. The Headteacher may not delegate the offer of employment to any other senior manager or governor.

The Headteacher is expected to involve at least one Local Academy Council governor (or Trust Board Director) in the appointment of all teachers.

Shortlisting panels will comprise a minimum of two people (normally three). In accordance with the statutory requirement, every shortlisting panel will have at least one member who has undertaken Safer Recruitment Training and they should train the other panelists to the same high expectation of the training. It is best practice that those who shortlist carry out the interview for a consistent approach.

3. ADVERTISING

All vacant posts will be advertised to ensure equality of opportunity and encourage as wide a field of candidates as possible. This will normally mean placing an advertisement externally on the DfE Teaching Vacancies website, plus other forms of advertisement, including social media. However, where there is a reasonable expectation that there are sufficient, suitably

qualified internal candidates, or employees are at risk of redundancy, vacancies may be advertised internally before an external advertisement. In these circumstances, the shortlisting panel may decide that certain parts of the recruitment process may be omitted but all candidates will be subject to a formal interview, the satisfactory reference requirements and any other necessary checks.

The advert will include the level of DBS check required depending on the role being recruited for and whether the role will involve regulated activity. All staff roles in school will require an enhanced DBS check with barred list check. Following the Crime and Policing Act 2026, the "supervision exemption" for regulated activity has been removed. Any volunteer in a role involving teaching, training, instructing, or supervising children frequently (more than 3 days in a 30-day period) or overnight is now considered to be in regulated activity. Consequently, all such volunteers must obtain an enhanced DBS check that includes children's barred list information.

The advert will specify whether the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020, which means certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed to employers. If they are disclosed, they will not be taken into account.

Within the advert the applicant will be provided with a link to the Trust's policy and practice in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

In line with KCSIE 2026, the Trust will explicitly inform all shortlisted candidates that online searches will be conducted as part of our due diligence process. This is to identify any incidents or issues that are publicly available online which the Trust may wish to explore with the applicant at the interview. The DfE does not encourage potential employers to search candidates' social media accounts.

4. INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

All applicants for all vacant posts will be provided with:

- A job description outlining the duties of the post and an indication of where the post fits into the organisational structure of the school/academy trust.
- A person specification may also be provided. This will also include a statement on behalf of the Trust of their commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.
- An application form (CVs will not be accepted).
- An Information pack containing:
 - A description of the school relevant to the vacant post.
 - Reference to the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.
 - Reference to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
 - DBS and other pre-employment checks required
 - A statement that canvassing any employee, or member of the Local Academy Council/Trust Board, directly or indirectly, is prohibited and will be considered a disqualification.
 - The closing date for the receipt of applications.
 - An outline of the terms of employment, including salary.
 - Reference to the Trust's Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy..

5. SHORTLISTING AND REFERENCE REQUESTS

The shortlisting panel will use an agreed shortlisting form. The criteria for selection will be consistently applied to all applicants based on the essential and desirable criteria for the post. The shortlisting panel will agree the candidates to be called for interview.

The shortlisting panel will take up at least two references on each short-listed candidate. If a candidate for a post working with children is not currently working with children, a reference will be sought from the most recent employment working with children to confirm details of their employment and their reasons for leaving. One reference will be from the applicant's current employer. Reference requests will ask the referee to confirm:

- The referee's relationship with the candidate.
- Details of the applicant's current post and salary.
- Performance history.
- All formal time-limited capability warnings which have not passed the expiration date.
- All formal time-limited disciplinary warnings, where not relating to safeguarding concerns, which have not passed the expiration date.
- All disciplinary action where the penalty is "time expired" and relate to safeguarding concerns.
- Details of any substantiated allegations or concerns relating to the safety and welfare of children.
- Whether the referee has any reservations as to the candidate's suitability to work with children. If so, the School will ask for specific details of the concerns and the reasons why the referee believes the candidate may be unsuitable to work with children.

References are the "property" of the shortlisting panel and strict confidentiality will be observed. Employer testimonials or open references i.e., those provided by the candidate and/or marked 'to whom it may concern' will not be accepted. References must be in writing and be specific to the job for which the candidate has applied. The shortlisting panel will not accept references from relatives or people writing solely in the capacity as a friend of the candidate. References will be verified, and any discrepancies will be discussed with the candidate at interview. Electronic references will be checked to ensure they originate from a legitimate source.

References will be checked against information on the application; any discrepancy/issue of concern noted to take up with the applicant at interview. The school will contact referees to clarify where information is vague or insufficient information is provided

On receipt, equality monitoring information must be separated from applications to ensure shortlisting decisions are based strictly on candidate merit and safeguarding suitability, completely isolated from personal protected characteristics.

If the field of applicants is felt to be weak, the post may be re-advertised.

Where the school has carried out an online search on shortlisted candidates as part of the due diligence, any concerns which arise may be discussed with the applicant at, or prior to, the interview stage.

All shortlisted candidates will be required to complete a self-disclosure of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children. For example:

- If they have a criminal history.
- Whether they are included on the barred list.
- Whether they are prohibited from teaching.
- Whether they are prohibited from taking part in the management of an independent school.

- Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales, not the law in their country of origin or where they were convicted.
- If they are known to the police and children's social care.
- Whether they are disqualified from providing childcare (Childcare Disqualification Regulations 2018).
- Any relevant overseas information.

Applicants will be asked to sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true. Where there is an electronic signature, the shortlisted candidate will be asked to physically sign a hard copy of the application at the point of interview.

6. INTERVIEWS

The format, style and duration of the interviews are matters for the Headteacher to decide in consultation with any governors involved in the process, but the following will be adhered to:

Briefing:

All candidates will be given relevant information about the school to enable the candidate to make further enquiries about the suitability of the advertised job.

The formal interview:

Before the interviews, the selection panel will agree on the interview format, including any other assessment methods. The questions asked will be aimed at obtaining evidence of how each candidate meets the requirement of the job description and the person specification, and each candidate will be assessed against all of the criteria for the post. The same areas of questioning will be covered for each applicant and no questions which would discriminate directly or indirectly on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 will be asked.

The selection process for every post will include exploration of the candidate's understanding of child safeguarding issues. Questions will include:

- Finding out what attracted the candidate to the post being applied for and their motivation for working with children.
- Exploring their skills and asking for examples of experience of working with children which are relevant to the role.
- Probing any gaps in employment, or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently, asking for the reasons for this.

The interview will also explore potential areas of concern to determine the applicant's suitability to work with children. Areas that may be concerning and lead to further probing include:

- Implication that adults and children are equal.
- Lack of recognition and/or understanding of the vulnerability of children.
- Inappropriate idealisation of children.
- Inadequate understanding of appropriate boundaries between adults and children.
- Indicators of negative safeguarding behaviours.

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

The interview will also include a discussion of any convictions, cautions or pending prosecutions, other than those protected, that the candidate has declared and are relevant to the prospective employment.

The recruitment documentation will be retained for six months from the date of interview. Applicants have the right to request access to notes written about them during the recruitment process. After six months all information about unsuccessful candidates will be securely destroyed.

7. OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT BY THE SELECTION PANEL

The offer of employment by the selection panel and acceptance by the candidate is binding on both parties subject to:

- Verification of identity (including original Birth Certificate).
- Verification of right to work in the UK.
- Proof of relevant qualifications.
- Satisfactory DBS Enhanced Disclosure.
- A Certificate of Good Conduct (if applicable) which may include EEA sanctions and restrictions.
- Barred list check.
- Teacher prohibition (if applicable).
- Section 128 check (if applicable). This is mandatory for all individuals taking up a management position within the Trust. This includes (but is not limited to) Headteachers, Trust Board Directors, Local Academy Council Governors, and members of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Pre-employment medical and physical fitness questionnaire.
- Satisfactory references.
- Disqualification under the Childcare Disqualification Act 2006, as amended.
- The successful candidate will be informed, normally by offer letter, that the appointment is subject to satisfactory completion of these checks.

Unsuccessful candidates will be notified.

8. PERSONNEL FILE AND SINGLE CENTRAL RECORD

The Trust's recruitment and vetting procedures, including the maintenance of the Single Central Record (SCR), apply explicitly to trainee teachers. For salaried trainees, the Trust will conduct all necessary checks. For fee-funded trainees, the Trust will obtain written confirmation from the initial teacher training provider that all mandatory pre-appointment checks have been completed and the trainee is suitable to work with children.

Recruitment and selection information for the successful candidate will be retained securely and confidentially for the duration of their employment with the School, including:

- Application form – signed by the applicant.
- Interview notes – including explanation of any gaps in the employment history.
- References – minimum of two.
- Proof of identity (including original birth certificate).
- Proof of right to work in the UK.
- Proof of relevant qualifications.
- Certificate of Good Conduct (where applicable) which may include for teaching positions, a letter of professional standing from the professional regulating authority in the country (or countries) in which the applicant has worked.
- Evidence of medical clearance from the Occupational Health service (if required).
- Evidence of DBS clearance and barred list check.

- Teacher prohibition checks (where applicable).
- Evidence of a Section 128 direction (where applicable).
- Offer of employment letter and signed contract of employment.
- Disqualification under the Childcare Disqualification Act 2006, as amended (where applicable).
- Safer Recruitment Checklist.

Retention of personal information for the successful candidate following the end of their employment will be in accordance with the School's Records Management and Retention Policy, which is compliant with relevant Data Protection Act. When retained documents have reached their data retention limit, they will be securely destroyed.

The school will destroy information obtained by a vetting exercise as soon as possible or within six months. A record of the result of the vetting or verification of the successful candidate will be retained on the employees file and the Single Central Record.

The school will normally collect personal information from you only where we have your consent to do so, where we need the personal information to perform a contract with/involving you, or where the processing is in our legitimate interests and not overridden by your data protection interests or fundamental rights and freedoms. In some cases, we may also have a legal obligation to collect personal information from you or may otherwise need the personal information to protect your vital interests or those of another person. The school will retain a record of consent as evidence that we have obtained consent to collect and process the data and that applicants have been advised of the purpose of the collection and processing.

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time and can do so by informing the School's Data Protection Officer, with the exception of documents that are required for a statutory requirement.

The school will maintain a Single Central Record of employment checks in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

For any existing volunteer who moves into "regulated activity" on 1 September 2026 due to the removal of the supervision exemption, the Trust must check their children's barred list status. This will be done by obtaining a new enhanced DBS check with barred list information, or a standalone barred list check if an enhanced DBS (without barred list) was obtained recently and there has been no break in service.

9. START OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUCTION

The pre-employment checks listed in section 8 must be completed before the employee starts work. Exceptions will only be made in exceptional circumstances where a risk assessment has been undertaken. Exceptions will never be made in the case of the barred list and teacher prohibition checks. Candidates are reminded that they can join the DBS Update Service at the point of application for a new check, or within 30 calendar days of the issue date printed on their certificate. Joining this service is considered best practice to support the portability of checks and ongoing vigilance.

It is strongly recommended that all staff sign up to the DBS Updates Service - <https://secure.crbonline.gov.uk/crsc/subscriber>

All new employees will be provided with an induction programme which will cover all relevant matters of School policy, but in particular safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is mandated that staff must understand the child protection arrangements, expected

standards of behaviour (Code of Conduct), and how to manage online safety risks. Please see The Stour Federation's Induction Policy.

Please note that existing staff will require a new DBS check following a break of more than 3 months, e.g. long term absence due to sickness or maternity leave.