



# Safer Recruitment Policy

## Purpose of the policy

At Wildwood Nature School (Wildwood Nature School) we understand the importance of creating a strong safeguarding culture. The starting point for this is our rigorous safer recruitment practices that ensure that any person joining the team understands the high importance the school places on safeguarding and what their responsibilities are from the moment they join us and feel that it is a safe environment in which to raise concerns.

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## 1. Wildwood Nature School staff responsibilities

Shortlisting and interviewing can be carried out by any member of the team. The head of school will decide on the most appropriate people, bearing in mind that:

- It must be at least two people;
- It must remain the same group for all shortlisting and interviewing;
- It must include someone who is safer recruitment trained.

Pre-appointment suitability checks, including references, will be carried out by someone who is safer recruitment trained – usually the school business manager.

## 2. Advert and application process

Opportunities to work at Wildwood Nature School, on either a paid or voluntary basis, are advertised in line with our [Equality Policy](#).

**Job adverts include an application pack, which includes:**

- Job description, featuring prominently the requirements to safeguard children, to report concerns and to promote a culture of safeguarding
- Person specification, featuring prominently the requirement to be a suitable person to work with young people
- Key information about Wildwood Nature School
- Statement about the importance placed on safeguarding at Wildwood Nature School
- Detail of the safer recruitment process that will be followed for all applicants
- Statement that the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974
- Links to key safeguarding policies: Safeguarding, Behaviour, Online safety, Whistleblowing
- Application form

The application form will be a standard form used for all roles , paid or voluntary (including trustee appointments) .

CVs will not be accepted.

The application form will include:

- A statement making clear that rigorous background checks will be carried out (in line with this policy)
- Instructions to applicants to ensure a complete employment history with any gaps detailed
- A specific section for detailing any gaps in employment history
- Request for two referees, with clear instructions on the most appropriate people to choose (see below)

### 3. Checking the application form

As part of the short-listing process, the Wildwood Nature School staff carrying out the short-listing will check for:

- Gaps in the employment record (there should be no gaps of more than a month)
- Suitability of references (see suitable references)
- Anything concerning in the personal statement

They will then follow up as necessary, by contacting the applicant to request further information.

### 4. The interview

The interview will include

- At least two interviewers, who will be the same for each candidate for any given role and will include someone safer recruitment trained
- A range of open questions designed to explore the candidates overall attitude towards children
- Targeted questions to check how the applicant would respond to a safeguarding concern
- Targeted questions to check whether the applicant would recognise a safeguarding concern, including something more abstract/unusual
- Relevant questions about disability and health in order to establish whether the candidate has the physical and mental capacity for the specific role.

There will not be any set right or wrong answers to these questions, and not knowing the Wildwood Nature School safeguarding policy or standard school practices at interview will

not necessarily mean the candidate was unsuitable. These questions are designed more to elicit any red flags that might suggest an unsuitable candidate.

Interviewers will establish beforehand what they are looking for in terms of answers to the questions set.

## 5. Trial session

For roles where the candidate will be working with children, all shortlisted applicants are asked to complete a 2–3 hour trial session with the children.

As well as assessing the quality of the interactions with the children, this is used as another opportunity to assess the suitability of the candidate to be in charge of children. Where possible, the interviewing team will observe the trial session, but will also seek the opinions of other practitioners and teachers who were present, and will ask questions designed to check the candidate's suitability.

## 6. Checks to be carried out

### **For all adults (over 16 years) working in any capacity**

- DBS – enhanced with barred list
- References
- Application form
- Identity (birth certificate / passport / photo drivers licence)
- Right to work in UK (if relevant)
- Proof of address
- Online search by name, including web search and social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter)
- Verification of the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- Self-disclosure form - A self-disclosure form will be sent to candidates when they receive a conditional offer of a job. The self-disclosure form is to encourage applicants to give information about any potential risk or concern that might not come up on a DBS. An unconditional offer will only be given once the interviewing team have reviewed the completed self-disclosure form. The self-disclosure form includes a check for disqualification under the 2006 Childcare Act and the 2018 Childcare Regulations.
- Relevant qualifications - certificates to be provided by candidate

## **For teaching staff**

All the above plus:

- Teacher prohibition and interim prohibition orders – checked via the Teaching Regulation Agency’s (TRA) Employer Access Service
- Verification of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and Induction via the Teaching Regulation Agency’s (TRA) Employer Access Service

## **For trustees and management roles**

All the above plus – Section 128 checks

*DBS and Section 128 checks are carried out by our supplier (DDC) with documentation verified by the DSL or one of the trustees.*

## **Agency and third-party staff (supply staff) and Trainee/student teachers**

Before the person starts at Wildwood, written confirmation will be obtained that all the above checks have been done, plus confirmation of their date of birth – from the relevant agency or educational establishment.

On arrival they will be asked to show their passport, with date of birth checked, to confirm their identity.

## **Volunteers**

The same checks apply to volunteers as to paid non-teaching staff members, except in the case of under-18 work experience placements – in which case a risk assessment to determine what checks are needed is carried out, referring to the guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)*.

## **Existing staff**

New checks will be carried out when

- an individual working at the school moves from a post that was not regulated activity with children into work which is considered to be regulated activity with children
- there has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more, or
- there are concerns about an individual’s suitability to work with children.

The DSL will determine what additional checks will be required in these circumstances, as the employee will have had some checks carried out already.

## 7. DBS checks and update service

All staff members will be required to register their DBS certificate on the update services. DBS certificates will be checked on a yearly basis. If any new information has been added

For staff joining with a DBS on the update service, certificates will be checked via the service but the original certificate will also be checked, with a check that the full name, certificate number, date of birth and address match those provided and verified via the service.

## 8. Online search

For teaching roles, an online search will be carried out, as follows:

- The school business manager or administrator carries out the checks – the same person checks all candidates for a particular role.
- Checks are always carried out by someone trained in safer recruitment.
- Candidates are checked once they have been provisionally offered a position, subject to checks.
- The checker searches the following sites, using the candidate's first and surname (including previous names as relevant):
  - Google – general web search
  - Facebook
  - Tik-tok
  - Linked-in
  - Instagram
  - Snapchat
  - Twitter
- Any information relating to age, gender, race, sexuality or other protected characteristic is ignored.
- Only publicly available information should be searched, not private information requiring invitation or passwords.
- Information that will be considered when viewing the search results:
  - Anything directly relevant to the candidate's suitability for the role;
  - Information that might raise concerns about damaging the reputation of the school;
  - Anything that contradicts information given by the candidate at application or interview stages.

- All other information is ignored.
- In reviewing the search results and linked information (eg on a social media profile) the checker should view information up to 5 years old.
- Only information from the last 5 years is considered relevant, unless the checker views something that raises a serious safeguarding concern about the candidate.
- The person carrying out the checks makes an initial judgement about whether any information has been found that might be concerning.
- In the case of potential concerns, the checker shares the information with the recruiting panel (co-head(s) and trustee(s)).
- The recruiting panel decides on a course of action, which could include:
  - Dis-regarding the information as not concerning;
  - Asking the candidate to meet to discuss the findings, before deciding whether to proceed or withdraw the job offer;
  - Withdrawing the job offer.
- For candidates who are subsequently employed, whether or not any concerns were found, 'Clear' should be recorded on the single central record, along with the date of the check and the person who carried it out. Any information collated should then be discarded.
- If the job offer is withdrawn, the information collated should be kept on file, along with a record of the decision making process, the date of the check and the person who carried it out.

## 9. Documentation

For all roles, the following documentation will be checked and copies kept on file:

### **Single Central Record (SCR)**

All information detailed in this policy, as well as other checks relating to personal details (e.g. qualifications, statutory training) are recorded in the Wildwood Nature School SCR. This document records, for all staff (permanent or casual), volunteers and trustees, the result of all checks personal information regarding their suitability and identity checks.

### **Keeping information on file**

All supporting information relating to suitability checks is kept in the person's personal file. These are held securely on encrypted computer drives, accessible only to the Head of School, School Business Manager and trustees.

For each person, this information always includes, but is not limited to:

- References
- Copies of identify and proof of address documentation

- Training and qualification certificates
- Anything related to prohibition order checks

Copies of DBS certificates are not kept on file, however the following information is recorded on the SCR:

- Date of last check
- Date of issue
- Level of check
- Certificate number
- Result of last check

## 10. Suitable referees

The application form will direct candidates to supply suitable referees. Referees must always cover:

- The last/current employment
- The most recent educational setting employment

Referees should be the head of the school/education setting/organisation, or at least a senior person with access to the candidate's personal file and history.

In general, candidates must review their employment history and judge the most suitable referees to include, bearing in mind:

- For how long they worked in a role
- How long ago they worked in a role
- The relevance of that role
- Comparable roles

If a candidate cannot provide suitable referees from their previous roles (for example due to a long gap in employment or if they are very young), they should talk to the Wildwood Nature School school business manager to agree on the most suitable alternatives.

The candidate's referee selection will be reviewed at short-listing and the candidate will be contacted to discuss options if the referees provided are insufficient to check their suitability.

In rare cases a non-employment referee may be accepted once a risk assessment has been carried out by the school business manager.



## 11. Checking references

References will be sought after an offer has been made to a candidate, but reference checking will always be completed before the person starts in the role at Wildwood Nature School.

Referees will be contacted via their business email address, rather than personal email address.

Referees will be provided with the job description and are asked to complete a standard reference form that includes questions that check, explicitly:

- The referees' judgement on whether the candidate is suitable to work with children
- Whether the candidate was the subject of the any disciplinary process while working with them
- Whether the candidate was the subject of the any child protection or safeguarding concern (of any kind) while working with them

Anything of any concern, including where information is vague or insufficient, will be clarified by the person checking references – in the first place with the person providing the reference, not the candidate.

Any serious child protection concerns that are revealed will be brought to the attention of the DSL who will decide on next steps, based on the nature of the concern. This includes contacting the police or other agencies (e.g. DBS).

The reference will be checked for:

- Job outline that matches the one submitted on the candidates application form
- Matching employment dates

If a referee refuses to complete the Wildwood Nature School standard reference, the person seeking references will ensure that they submit all the above information in some form.

## 12. Candidates who have spent time overseas

If a candidate has been resident overseas for three months or more over the past five years, the candidate's criminal record in that country will be checked. The Home Office guidance on applying for criminal records checks for overseas applicants will be followed.

In addition all the regular checks, as appropriate to the role, are carried out (including DBS even if the candidate has never lived in the UK)

The person carrying out the checks considers what additional checks may be needed, referring for guidance to *Individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)*.

For any documents not in English a certified translation will be requested or arranged.

If we are unable to obtain overseas checks for a candidate, a risk assessment will be carried out to help make an informed decision about how best to proceed.

### 13. Reporting concerns to DBS or other agencies

If, as part of the recruitment process, Wildwood Nature School discovers a serious un-logged (with the DBS or DfE prohibited list) safeguarding incident, the DSL will report this to the appropriate agency or the police.

### 14. Induction

Staff, volunteers or trustees joining Wildwood Nature School all complete a standard induction in their first week. This is used as another opportunity to embed the Wildwood Nature School culture of safeguarding.

As well as other items relating to getting to know the role and Wildwood Nature School, the induction always includes:

- Checking that the appointee has read and understood certain key policies, including the *Staff Code of Conduct Policy*, *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*, *Online Safety Policy*, *Anti-Bullying Policy*, *Behaviour Policy*, and *Health and Safety Policies* all available on our [website](#).
- Training from their manager on their responsibilities and the Wildwood Nature School processes related to safeguarding, in particular those relating to reporting concerns about children or adults.
- Safeguarding in Education training and Prevent training – online learning via a recognised training provider, with certificates saved to their personal files and noted on the SCR.

See induction documentation for full details on induction process.

## 15. Probationary period

New staff joining Wildwood Nature School must complete a probationary period of not less than 12 term-time weeks. During this period the staff member's employment can be terminated with minimal notice.

One of the main reasons for this probation is to ensure that the appointed person is suitable to be in charge of children. During this time, their performance is closely reviewed by their line manager and Head of School.

Full details of the probationary period can be found in the staff handbook.

## 16. Concerns about a staff member – ensuring ongoing suitability of staff

During the probationary period and beyond (i.e. after the successful completion of the probation), any concerns about a staff member's suitability to be in charge of children will result in immediate action. These could range from a low-level concern (see our [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Section B.13 Low-level concerns about a member of staff](#)) about not having a nurturing attitude through to serious child protection concerns.

Specific actions will depend on the level of concern, but include:

- An informal meeting followed by an opportunity to rectify the concern while under close review
- Disciplinary proceedings (see our [Staff Code of Conduct Policy](#))
- Dismissal and reporting to the relevant agencies (see our [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#))

All concerns about staff members will be recorded and kept in their personal file and also flagged on the SCR.

### **Policy review**

Policy created: February 2023

Last reviewed:

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Next review date: February 2025