Gardener Schools Group

Safer Recruitment Policy

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1. General

Gardener Schools Group (GSG) is committed to ensuring the best possible environment for the children and young people in its care. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is our highest priority.

The Schools within the Group aim to recruit staff that share and understand our commitment and to ensure that no job applicant is treated unfairly by reason of a protected characteristic as defined within the Equality Act 2010.

All queries on the School's Application Form and recruitment process must be directed to the Headteacher or HR Advisor

An entry will be made on the Single Central Register for all current members of staff at the School, the proprietorial body and all individuals who work in regular contact with children including volunteers, supply staff and those employed as third parties.

All checks will be made in advance of appointment.

2. Scope of this Policy

The Recruitment, Selection and Disclosures Policy and Procedure herewith refers and applies to staff directly recruited and employed by the School. In the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, staff are defined as:

> *Any person working at the School whether under a contract of employment, under a contract for services or otherwise than under a contract, but does not include supply staff or a volunteer.*

In the case of agency or contract workers, the School shall obtain written confirmation from the agency or company that it has carried out the appropriate checks. The School conducts identity checks on agency and contract workers on arrival in School and, in the case of agency workers which includes supply staff, the School must be provided with a copy of the DBS check for such staff.

The School will check with the relevant supply agency that the required checks have been carried out (identity, enhanced disclosure – renewed every 3 years, right to work in the UK, barred list/list 99, prohibition, qualifications, overseas checks plus in line with KCSIE two references, declaration of medical fitness, check of previous employment history). The Single Central Register shows these checks have been made and the School carries out its own identity check and has a copy of the disclosure.

In respect of contractors, unchecked contractors will under no circumstances be allowed to work unsupervised in School. The School will determine the appropriate level of supervision depending on the circumstances.

Any staff who TUPE transfer into the School's staff will be required to undertake the statutory requirements with regard to safer recruitment checks.

If staff are transferred under TUPE (gap of three months or less and information complete) information will be passed to the new employer and a note made on the Single Central Register that details have been accepted under TUPE.

3. Application Form

The School will only accept applications from candidates completing the relevant Application Form in full. CVs will not be accepted in substitution for completed Application Forms.

The School will make candidates aware that all posts in the School involve some degree of responsibility for safeguarding children, although the extent of that responsibility will vary according to the nature of the post. Candidates for employed posts will receive a Job Description and Person Specification for the role applied for.

Checks will be made of previous employment history to ascertain satisfactory reasons for any gaps in employment. These checks will then be checked against references and any discrepancies discussed with the candidate.

As the position for which candidates are applying involves substantial opportunity for access to children, it is important that applicants provide the School with legally accurate answers. Upfront disclosure of a criminal record may not debar a candidate from appointment as the School shall consider the nature of the offence, how long ago and at what age it was committed and any other relevant factors. Information should be submitted in confidence enclosing details in a separate sealed envelope which will be seen and then destroyed by the Head/HR Advisor. If candidates would like to discuss this beforehand, they are asked to please telephone in confidence to the HR Advisor for advice.

Any unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings must be disclosed to the School. However, amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975 (2013) provide that certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected' and are not subject to disclosure to employers, and cannot be taken into account. Guidance and criteria on the filtering of these cautions and convictions can be found at the Disclosure and Barring Service website.

If the candidate is currently working with children, on either a paid or voluntary basis, the School will ask their current employer about disciplinary offences, including disciplinary offences relating to children or young persons (whether the disciplinary sanction is current or time expired), and whether the candidate has been the subject of any child protection allegations or concerns and if so the outcome of any enquiry or disciplinary procedure.

4. Invitation to Interview

The School will short list applicants according to the relevance and applicability of their professional attributes and personal qualities to the role. At least two people will carry out the shortlisting exercise, consider any inconsistencies, look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them and explore all potential concerns.

As part of the shortlisting process, the School will carry out an online search on shortlisted candidates as part of its due diligence. This may help to identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the School may want to explore with an applicant at interview.

This forms part of the School's wider safeguarding due diligence which aims to prevent and/or deter individuals who may be unsuitable to work with children from working in a school environment.

Shortlisted candidates should be asked to complete a self-declaration form in relation to their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children. Self-declaration is subject to Ministry of Justice guidance on the disclosure of criminal records. Applicants will be asked to sign a declaration confirming that the information they have provided is true. Where there is an electronic signature, the shortlisted candidate should physically sign a hard copy of the application at the point of interview.

Short-listed applicants will then be invited to attend a formal interview at which his/her relevant skills and experience will be discussed in more detail. For teaching staff, the interview may include teaching a lesson or another observed activity which will demonstrate the interaction between the candidate and the pupils.

The School will, where possible, obtain references prior to interview. This allows any concerns raised to be explored further with the referee and can be taken up with the shortlisted candidate at interview.

All formal interviews will have a panel of at least two people chaired by the Head or another designated senior member of staff. It is recommended best practice that at least one person on the appointment panel will have undertaken safer recruitment training. A Board Member should chair the panel for the Head's appointment. The interviewers involved will be required to state any prior personal relationship or knowledge of any of the candidates and a judgement will be made by the Chair as to whether or not an interviewer should withdraw from the panel. Should the Chair have a conflict of interest, the Vice Chair shall decide whether the Chair should withdraw from the panel.

The interview will be conducted in person and the areas which it will explore will include suitability to work with children.

All candidates invited to interview must bring documents confirming any educational and professional qualifications that are necessary or relevant for the post (e.g. the original or certified copy of certificates, diplomas etc). Where originals or certified copies are not available for the successful candidate, written confirmation of the relevant qualifications must be obtained by the candidate from the awarding body.

The School requests that all candidates invited to interview also bring with them:

1. A current photographic driving licence or a passport or a full birth certificate;

2. A utility bill or financial statement issued within the last three months showing the candidate's current name and address;

3. Where appropriate any documentation evidencing a change of name;

4. Where the candidate is not a citizen of a country within the European Economic Area or Switzerland, proof of entitlement to work and reside in the UK.

Please note that originals of the above are necessary. Photocopies or certified copies are not sufficient.

Candidates with a disability who are invited to interview should inform the School of any necessary reasonable adjustments or arrangements to assist them in attending the interview.

5. Conditional Offer of Appointment: Pre-Appointment Checks

Any offer to a successful candidate will be conditional upon:

1. Receipt of at least two satisfactory references (if these have not already been received);

2. Verification of identity and qualifications including, where appropriate, evidence of the right to work in the UK;

3. A satisfactory enhanced DBS check and if appropriate, a check of the Barred List maintained by the DBS;

4. For a candidate to be employed as a teacher, a check that that the candidate is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State. Teaching work is defined in The Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012 to encompass:

- Planning and preparing lessons and courses for pupils
- Delivering and preparing lessons to pupils
- Assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils
- Reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils;

5. Verification of professional qualifications, where appropriate;

6. Verification of successful completion of statutory induction period (for teaching posts – applies to those who obtained QTS after 7 May 1999);

7. Where the successful candidate has worked or been resident overseas such checks and confirmations as the School may consider appropriate so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered;

8. Satisfactory medical fitness;

9. Where the successful candidate will be taking part in the management of the school, a check will be carried out under section 128 of the Independent Educational Provision in England (Prohibition on Participation in Management) Regulations 2014. This applies to all Governors, Senior Management Team and teaching heads of department; and

10. Candidates who have lived or worked outside the UK must undergo the same checks as all other staff. This includes obtaining (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate (including barred list information, for those who will be engaging in regulated activity) even if the individual has never been to the UK. In addition, the School must make any further checks they think appropriate so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered. These checks could include, where available:
    - criminal records checks for overseas applicants - Home Office guidance can be found on GOV.UK; and for teaching positions

- obtaining a letter of professional standing from the professional regulating authority in the country in which the applicant has worked. Advice about which regulatory or professional body applicants will be sought from the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom, UK NARIC. Where available, such evidence will be considered together with information obtained through other pre-appointment checks to help assess their suitability.

Where this information is not available the School will seek alternative methods of checking suitability and or undertake a risk assessment that supports informed decision making on whether to proceed with the appointment. Although sanctions and restrictions imposed by another regulating authority do not prevent a person from taking up teaching positions in England, the School will consider the circumstances that led to the restriction or sanction being imposed when considering a candidate's suitability for employment.

It is the School's practice that a successful candidate must complete a pre-employment health questionnaire. The information contained in the questionnaire will then be held by the School in strictest confidence and processed in accordance with the Recruitment Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. This information will be reviewed against the Job Description and the Person Specification for the particular role, together with details of any other physical or mental requirements of the role i.e. proposed workload, extra-curricular activities, layout of the School.

The School is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010. No job offer will be withdrawn without first consulting with the applicant, considering medical evidence and considering reasonable adjustments.

6. References

The School will seek the references referred to in section 5 above for shortlisted candidates (including internal applicants) and will approach previous employers for information to verify particular experience or qualifications, before interview. One of the references must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer. References must be received by a senior person with appropriate authority. If the candidate does not wish the School to take up references in advance of the interview, they should notify the School at the time of applying.

The School will ask all referees if the candidate is suitable to work with children and to provide facts of any substantiated safeguarding concerns or allegations that meet the harm threshold set out in Part 4 of the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Substantiated allegations that meet the harm threshold should be included in references. Any repeated concerns or allegations which do not meet the harm threshold which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated, or malicious should not be included in any reference.

The School will only accept references obtained directly from the referee and it will not rely on references or testimonials provided by the applicant or on open references or testimonials. The School will verify all references. References for appointed persons will be verified over the phone with the referee. Where references are received electronically, the School will ensure they originate from a legitimate source.

The School will compare any information provided by the referee with that provided by the candidate on the Application Form. Any inconsistencies will be discussed with the candidate.

7. Criminal Records Policy

The School will refer to the Department for Education ("DfE") document, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and any amended version in carrying out the necessary required DBS checks.

The School complies with the provisions of the DBS Code of Practice, a copy of which may be obtained on request, or accessed here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice.

There are limited circumstances where the school will accept a check from another educational institution which are as follows:

This is where the new member of staff ("M") has worked in: –

(a) A school or a maintained school in England in a position which brought M regularly into contact with children or young persons;

(b) A maintained school in England in a position to which M was appointed on or after May 2006 and which did not bring M regularly into contact with children or young persons; or

(c) An institution within the further education sector in England or in a 16 to 19 Academy in a position which involved the provision of education or which brought M regularly into contact with children or young persons, during a period which ended not more than three months before M's appointment.

In these circumstances the school may apply for a disclosure but is not required to do so. A new, separate barred list check will be obtained.

DBS Update Service

Where an applicant subscribes to the DBS Update Service the applicant must give consent to the school to check there have not been changes since the issue of a disclosure certificate. A barred list check is completed as part of the update service.

If disclosure is delayed

If an 'enhanced disclosure' is delayed, following the completion of a risk assessment the Head may allow the member of staff to commence work:

- Without confirming the appointment;
- After a satisfactory check of the barred list if the person will be working in regulated activity and all other relevant checks (including any appropriate prohibition checks) having been completed satisfactorily;
- Provided that the DBS application has been made in advance;
- With appropriate safeguards taken (for example, a supervision plan);

- Safeguards reviewed at least every two weeks by the Head/HR Advisor and member of staff;
- The person in question is informed what these safeguards are; and
- A note is added to the single central register and evidence kept of the measures put in place are kept on file.

8. Online search

As part of the shortlisting process we will carry out an online search as part of our due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. The search may identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school might want to explore with the applicant at interview.

9. Volunteers

The School will request an enhanced DBS disclosure and Children's Barred List information on all volunteers undertaking regulated activity with pupils at or on behalf of the School (the definition of regulated activity set out in section 4.3 above will apply to all volunteers).

The School will request an enhanced DBS disclosure without Children's Barred List information on all volunteers who do not undertake regulated activity. This is likely to be because their volunteering duties are subject to regular, day to day supervision by a fully checked member of staff or by a volunteer who the School has deemed appropriate to supervise and ensure the safety of those pupils in their care.

Under no circumstances will the School permit an unchecked volunteer to have unsupervised contact with pupils.

It is the School's policy that a new DBS certificate is required for volunteers who will engage in regulated activity but who have not been involved in any activities with the School for three consecutive months or more. Those volunteers who are likely to be involved in activities with the School on a regular basis may be required to sign up to the DBS update service as this permits the School to obtain up to date criminal records information without delay prior to each new activity in which a volunteer participates.

In addition, the School will seek to obtain such further suitability information about a volunteer as it considers appropriate in the circumstances. This may include (but is not limited to the following):

- Formal or informal information provided by staff, parents and other volunteers;
- Character references from the volunteer's place of work or any other relevant source;
- Qualifications, if relevant, to the volunteering role and
- An informal safer recruitment interview.

10. Supply Staff Agency and third-party staff

- We will only use those agencies which operate a safer recruitment policy and 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, including if the position is regulated then the agency must have obtained an Enhanced DBS check with barred list check.

- The Agency must give written notification that the enhanced DBS check has been obtained by either the employment business or another such business.
- Where a DBS certificate has disclosed any matter or information, the school must obtain a copy of the certificate from the agency. Any information disclosed as part of the DBS check will be treated confidentially. These agencies should be able to demonstrate that their staff have received appropriate safeguarding training.
- We will carry out identity checks when the individual arrives at Trust premises and we will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made

11. Visiting speakers and Prevent Duty

The Prevent Duty Guidance requires the School to have clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers, whether invited by staff or by pupils, are suitable and appropriately supervised.

The School is not permitted to obtain a DBS disclosure or Children's barred List information on any visiting speaker who does not engage in regulated activity at the School or perform any other regular duties for or on behalf of the School.

All visiting speakers will be subject to the School's usual visitor's protocol. This will include proof of identification on arrival to the School Office, signing in and out at Reception, the wearing of a visitor's badge at all times and being escorted by a fully vetted member of staff between appointments. The line manager or staff member who has organised the visitor must also complete a School Visitor form which will be kept by Human Resources.

The School will also obtain such formal or informal background information about a visiting speaker as is reasonable in the circumstances to decide whether to invite and/or permit a speaker to attend the School, in doing so the School will always have regard to the Prevent Duty Guidance and the definition of ''extremism'' set out in KCSIE which states:

''Extremism'' is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. Terrorist groups very often draw on extremist ideas developed by extremist organisations.''

In fulfilling its Prevent Duty obligations the School does not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability or age.

12. Retention, Security of Records and Data Protection Obligations

The School will comply with its obligations regarding the retention and security of records in accordance with the DBS Code of Practice and its obligations under its Data Protection Policy. Copies of DBS certificates will not be retained for longer than 6 months.

The School will comply with its data protection obligations in respect of the processing of criminal records information. More information on this is included in the Recruitment Privacy Notice and the Data Protection Policy.

13. Pupils staying with host families

- Where we make arrangements for pupils to be provided with care and accommodation by a host family, to which they are not related (for example, during a foreign exchange visit), we will consider the suitability of the adults in the respective families. These arrangements will be for short periods of less than 28 days.

- The responsible adults will be engaging in regulated activity for the period of the stay therefore they will require an enhanced DBS checks with barred list information on those people.

- We will use all the intelligence obtained to determine whether the adults would be a suitable host for a child.

- Where we are organising such hosting arrangements overseas and host families cannot be checked in the same way, we will work with our partner schools and organisations abroad to ensure that similar assurances are undertaken prior to the visit.

- The organiser will use their professional judgement to satisfy themselves that the arrangements are appropriate and sufficient to safeguard. They may consider whether it is necessary to contact the relevant foreign embassy or High Commission of the country in question to discuss what checks may be possible in respect of those providing homestay outside of the UK.

14. POLICY ON THE RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS

The School will not unfairly discriminate against any candidate for employment on the basis of conviction or other details revealed. The School makes appointment decisions on the basis of merit and ability. If an individual has a criminal record this will not automatically bar him/her from employment within the School. Instead, each case will be decided on its merits in accordance with the objective assessment criteria set out below.

All candidates should be aware that provision of false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected or summary dismissal if they have been appointed, and a possible referral to the police and/or DBS.

Under the relevant legislation, it is unlawful for the School to employ anyone who is included on the lists maintained by the DBS of individuals who are considered unsuitable to work with children. In addition, it will also be unlawful for the School to employ anyone who is the subject of a disqualifying order made on being convicted or charged with the following offences against children: murder, manslaughter, rape, other serious sexual offences, grievous bodily harm or other serious acts of violence. It is also unlawful for the School to knowingly employ someone who works in the relevant settings and is disqualified from providing childcare as set out in the statutory guidance "Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006".

It is a criminal offence for any person who is disqualified from working with children to attempt to apply for a position within the School. The School will report the matter to the Police and/or the DBS if:

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

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 DBS 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;
- whether the conviction or caution is 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2020 (if yes, it will not be taken into account);
- 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;
- in the case of disqualification from providing childcare, whether the applicant has or is able to obtain an Ofsted waiver from disqualification; and
- the circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation(s) offered by the convicted person.

If the post involves regular contact with 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, 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 some 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.

Data Protection Obligations

The School will comply with its data protection obligations in respect of the processing of criminal records information. More information on this is included in the Recruitment Privacy Notice and the Data Protection Policy.