

Recruitment Policy

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Introduction

The safe recruitment of staff is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in education. The Outdoors Group is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all learners in its care. As an employer, the company expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of this policy are to help deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse learners or are otherwise unsuited to working with them by having appropriate procedures for appointing staff.

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- to ensure that the best possible staff are recruited based on their merits, abilities and suitability for the position.
- to ensure that all job applicants are considered equally and consistently.
- to ensure that no job applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability or age.
- to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance including the statutory guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE), Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE, 2022), the Prevent Duty Guidance 2021 (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, 2015) and any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- to ensure that the company meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.

Employees involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with the provisions of this policy. The company has a principle of open competition in its approach to recruitment and will seek to recruit the best applicant for the job.

The recruitment and selection process should ensure the identification of the person best suited to the job based on the applicant's abilities, qualification, experience and merit as measured against the job description and person specification.

The recruitment and selection of staff will be conducted in a professional, timely and responsive manner and in compliance with current employment legislation, and relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance (including KCSIE, 2022 and Prevent Duty Guidance 2021 (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, 2015)).

If a member of staff involved in the recruitment process has a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant, they must declare it as soon as they are aware of the individual's application and where possible avoid any involvement in the recruitment and selection decision-making process.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Company Directors to:

- Ensure the company has effective policies and procedures in place for recruitment of all staff and volunteers in accordance with DfE guidance and legal requirements.
- Monitor the Company's compliance with them.

It is the responsibility of the Company Directors and other Senior Leaders/Managers involved in recruitment to:

- Ensure that the company operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure all appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers who work at The Outdoors Group/School settings.
- To monitor contractors' and agencies' compliance with this document.
- Promote welfare of children and young people at every stage of the procedure.

Definition of Regulated Activity and Frequency

Any position undertaken at, or on behalf of the Company will amount to "regulated activity" if it is carried out:

- frequently, meaning once a week or more; or
- overnight, meaning between 2.00am and 6.00am; or
- satisfies the "period condition", meaning four times or more in a 30-day period; and
- provides the opportunity for contact with children.

Roles which are carried out on an unpaid/voluntary basis will only amount to regulated activity if, in addition to the above, they are carried out on an unsupervised basis.

The Company is not permitted to check the Children's Barred List unless an individual will be engaging in "regulated activity".

The company is required to carry out an enhanced DBS check for all staff supply staff and Directors who will be engaging in regulated activity. However, the Company can also carry out an enhanced DBS check on a person who would be carrying out regulated activity but for the fact that they do not carry out their duties frequently enough i.e., roles which would amount to regulated activity if carried out more frequently.

Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Advertising

To ensure equality of opportunity, the company will advertise all vacant posts to encourage as wide a field of applicant as possible, normally this entails an external advertisement.

Any advertisement will make clear the company's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

All documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (Data Protection Act, 2018)

Application Forms

The Outdoors Group uses its own application form and all applicants for employment will be required to complete an application form containing questions about their academic and full employment history and their suitability for the role (in addition all applicants are required to account for any gaps or discrepancies in employment history). Applicants submitting an incomplete application form will not be shortlisted.

The application form will include the applicant's declaration regarding convictions, time spent abroad and working with children, and will make it clear that the post is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

It is unlawful for the Company to employ anyone who is barred from working with children. It is a criminal offence for any person who is barred from working with children to apply for a position at the Company. All applicants will be made aware that providing false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected, or summary dismissal if the applicant has been selected, and referral to the police and/or the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS).

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

A job description is a key document in the recruitment process and must be finalised prior to taking any other steps in the process. It will clearly and accurately set out the duties and responsibilities of the job role.

The person specification is of equal importance and informs the selection decision. It details the skills, experience, abilities, and expertise that are required to do the job. The person specification will include a specific reference to suitability to work with children in an outdoors environment.

References

References for short-listed applicants will be sent for immediately after interview.

All offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of a minimum of two references which are considered satisfactory by the Company. One of the references must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer. If the current/most recent employment does/did not involve work with children, then the second reference should be from the employer with whom the applicant most recently worked with children. The referee should not be relative. References will always be sought and obtained directly from the referee and their purpose is to provide objective and factual information to support appointment decisions.

All referees will be asked whether they believe the applicant is suitable for the job for which they have applied and whether they have any reason to believe that the applicant is unsuitable to work with children.

Please note that no questions will be asked about health or medical fitness prior to any offer of employment being made.

Any discrepancies or anomalies will be followed up.

The Company does not accept open references, testimonials, or references from relatives.

Interviews

There will be a face-to-face interview with a minimum of two interviewers on the panel. The interview process will explore the applicant's ability to carry out the job description and meet the person specification. It will enable the panel to explore any anomalies or gaps which have been identified in order to satisfy themselves that the chosen applicant can meet the safeguarding criteria (in line with Safer Recruitment).

Any information in regard to past disciplinary action or allegations, cautions or convictions will be discussed and considered in the circumstance of the individual case during the interview process, if it has been disclosed on the application form.

At least one member of any interviewing panel will have undertaken safer recruitment training or refresher training as applicable.

All applicants who are invited to an interview will be required to bring evidence of their Proof of identity and Right to Work in the UK (in accordance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and DBS identity checking guidelines). Where an applicant claims to have changed their name by deed poll or any other means (e.g., marriage, adoption, statutory declaration) they will be required to provide documentary evidence of the change.

And any relevant qualifications and /or professional status, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have actually obtained any academic or vocational qualification legally required for the position and claimed in their application form.

Original documents will only be accepted, and photocopies will be taken. Unsuccessful applicants' documents will be destroyed 6 months after the recruitment process was completed.

Offer of Appointment and New Employee Process

In accordance with the recommendations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) and the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 the Company carries out a number of pre-employment checks in respect of all prospective employees.

If it is decided to make an offer of employment following the formal interview, any such offer will be conditional on the following:

- the agreement of a mutually acceptable start date and the signing of a contract incorporating the Company's standard terms and conditions of employment.
- verification of the applicant's identity
- the receipt of two references which the Company considers to be satisfactory

For positions which involve "teaching work":

- the Company being satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of a sanction, restriction or prohibition issued by the Teaching Regulation Agency (formerly National College for Teaching and Leadership), or any predecessor or successor body, or by a regulator of the teaching profession in any other European Economic Area country which prevents the applicant working at the Company or which, in the Company's opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work at the Company
- the Company being satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of any proceedings before a professional conduct panel or equivalent body in the UK or any other country for any reason which prevents the applicant working at the Company or which, in the Company's opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work at the Company.
- where the position amounts to "regulated activity" the receipt of an enhanced disclosure from the DBS which the Company considers to be satisfactory
- where the position amounts to "regulated activity" confirmation that the applicant is not named on the Children's Barred List
- confirmation that the applicant is not subject to a direction under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 which prohibits, disqualifies or restricts them from providing education at a school, taking part in the management of an

independent school or working in a position which involves regular contact with children

- confirmation that the applicant is not subject to a direction under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 which prohibits, disqualifies, or restricts them from being involved in the management of an independent school.
- verification of the applicant's medical fitness for the role
- verification of the applicant's right to work in the UK.
- any further checks which are necessary as a result of the applicant having lived or worked outside of the UK.
- verification of professional qualifications which the Company deems a requirement for the post, or which the applicant otherwise cites in support of their application.

Whether a position amounts to "regulated activity" must therefore be considered by the Company in order to decide which checks are appropriate. It is however likely that in nearly all cases the Company will be able to carry out an enhanced DBS check and Children's Barred List check.

A 'New Starter' checklist will be used to track and audit paperwork obtained in accordance with Safer Recruitment Training. The checklist will be retained on personnel files and recorded on the Single Central Record (SCR).

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 does not apply to positions which involve working with or having access to learners. Therefore, any convictions and cautions that would normally be considered 'SPENT' must be declared when applying for any position at The Outdoors Group Ltd.

Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) Check

The Company applies for an enhanced disclosure from the DBS and a check of the Children's Barred List (now known as an Enhanced Check for Regulated Activity) in respect of all positions at the Company which amount to "regulated activity" as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended). The purpose of carrying out an Enhanced Check for Regulated Activity is to identify whether an applicant is barred from working with children by inclusion on the Children's Barred List and to obtain other relevant suitability information.

It is the Company's policy that the DBS disclosure must be obtained before the commencement of employment of any new employee.

Members of staff at The Outdoors Group are aware of their obligation to inform the Headteacher or the HR Department of any cautions or convictions that arise after these checks taking place.

DBS checks will still be requested for applicants with recent periods of overseas residence and those with little or no previous UK residence.

Portability of DBS Certificates Checks

Staff may wish to join the DBS Update Service if they are likely to require another check in the future. Applicants may sign up to the Service for a fee of £13.00 per annum, which is payable by the applicant. This allows for portability of a Certificate across employers.

Where the member of staff has already joined the DBS Update Service the Company will:

- obtain consent from the applicant to carry out an update search.
- confirm the Certificate matches the individual's identity.
- examine the original certificate to ensure that it is for the appropriate workforce and level of check, i.e., enhanced certificate/enhanced including barred list information.

The update check would identify and advise whether there has been any change to the information recorded, since the initial certificate was issued. Applicants will be able to see a full list of those organisations that have carried out a status check on their account.

Dealing with Convictions

The Company operates a formal procedure if a DBS Certificate is returned with details of convictions. Consideration will be given to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and also:

- the nature, seriousness, and relevance of the offence.
- how long ago the offence occurred.
- one-off or history of offences.
- changes in circumstances.
- decriminalisation and remorse.

A formal meeting will take place face-to-face to establish the facts with a Senior Manager, (including the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher at The Outdoors School or Company Director). A decision will be made following this meeting. 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 disclosure check, the Senior Manager and HR team will evaluate all the risk factors above before a position is offered or confirmed.

If an applicant wishes to dispute any information contained in a disclosure, they may do so by contacting the DBS. In cases where the applicant would otherwise be offered a position where it not for the disputed information, the Company may, where practicable and at its discretion, defer a final decision about the appointment until the applicant has had a reasonable opportunity to challenge the disclosure information.

Secretary of State Prohibition Orders

In all cases where an applicant is to undertake a teaching role, a Prohibition Order check will be made using the Employer Access Online Service. It is anticipated that this will be performed at offer stage. A person who is prohibited from teaching must not be appointed to work as a teacher in such a setting.

Prohibition orders are made by the Secretary of State following consideration by a professional conduct panel convened by the Teaching Regulation Agency. Pending such consideration, the Secretary of State may issue an interim prohibition order if it is considered to be in the public interest to do so.

A section 128 direction 39 prohibits or restricts a person from taking part in the management of an Independent school. A person who is prohibited is unable to participate in any management of an independent school, a governor on any governing body in an Independent school, or a management position that retains or has been delegated any management responsibilities. Where the person will be engaging in regulated activity, DBS barred list check will be used to identify any section 128 direction.

Medical Fitness

The Company is legally required to verify the medical fitness of anyone to be appointed to a post at the Company, after an offer of employment has been made but before the appointment can be confirmed.

All applicants are requested to complete a medical questionnaire and where appropriate a doctor's medical report may be required. 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.

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

Overseas Checks

The Company, in accordance with the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) will, if applicable, sponsor new foreign nationals (see Certificate of Sponsorship section).

In addition, applicants who have lived/travelled abroad for more than 3 months will need to obtain a criminal records check from the relevant country. The applicant will not be permitted to commence work until the overseas information has been received and is considered satisfactory by the Company.

Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS)

If an appointed applicant is a national of a non-EEA country, a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) may be required.

Before any offer of employment is made, the Interviewing Managers should consult with the Human Resources Department to establish whether the Company has any unallocated Sponsorship Certificates.

Criteria for issuing a CoS are:

- the job is in a “designated shortage” occupation, or.
- it passes the Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT).
- the job is at NQF6 Level or above.
- minimum salary levels as stated by the UKVI are met.

Only the Human Resources Department will be able to issue a CoS. In addition to the CoS the applicant must apply for entry clearance/leave to remain through the UKVI and comply with the UKVI requirements.

The process can take up to three months and staff cannot, under any circumstances, be employed until permission is given.

Induction Programme

All new employees will be given an induction programme which will clearly identify the Company policies and procedures, including the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct), and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE, 2022), and make clear the expectations which will govern how staff carry out their roles and responsibilities.

Single Central Record (SCR)

In addition to the various staff records kept in Company and on individual personnel files, a single centralised record of recruitment and vetting checks is kept in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 requirements. This is kept up-to-date and retained by the Human Resources Department.

The Single Central Record (SCR) will contain details of the following:

- All employees who are employed to work at the Company.
- all employees who are employed as supply staff to the Company whether employed directly or through an agency.
- all others who have been chosen by the Company to work in regular contact with children. This will cover volunteers, directors, freelancers, contractors and people brought into the school to provide additional teaching or instruction for learners but who are not staff members, e.g., play therapists etc.

Records Retention and Data Protection

The Company is legally required to undertake the above pre-employment checks. Therefore, if an applicant is successful in their application, the Company will retain on their personnel file any relevant information provided as part of the application process. This will include copies of documents used to verify identity, right to work in the UK, medical fitness and qualifications. Medical information may be used to help the Company to discharge its obligations as an employer, e.g., so that the Company may consider reasonable adjustments if an employee suffers from a disability or to assist with any other workplace issue.

This documentation will be retained by the Company for the duration of the successful applicant's employment with the Company. All information retained on employees is kept centrally in the Human Resources Office in a locked and secure cabinet.

The same policy applies to any suitability information obtained about volunteers involved with Company activities.

The Outdoor School will retain all interview notes on all unsuccessful applicants for a period of 6 months, after which time the notes will be confidentially destroyed (i.e., shredded). The 6-month retention period is in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (Data Protection Act 2018).

Ongoing Employment

The Outdoors Group recognises that safer recruitment and selection is not just about the start of employment but should be part of a larger policy framework for all staff.

The Company will therefore provide ongoing training and support for all staff, as identified through the supervision/appraisal procedure.

Leaving Employment at The Outdoors Group

Despite the best efforts to recruit safely, there may be occasions when allegations of serious misconduct or abuse against children and young people are raised. This policy is primarily concerned with the promotion of safer recruitment and details the pre-employment checks that will be undertaken prior to employment being confirmed. Whilst these are pre-employment checks the Company also has a legal duty to make a referral to the DBS in circumstances where an individual:

- has applied for a position at the Company despite being barred from working with children; or
- has been removed by the Company from working in regulated activity (whether paid or unpaid), or has resigned prior to being removed, because they have harmed, or pose a risk of harm to, a child.

If the individual referred to the DBS is a teacher, the Company may also decide to make a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency.

Contractors and Agency Staff

Contractors engaged by the Company must complete the same checks for their employees that the Company is required to complete for its staff. The Company requires confirmation that these checks have been completed before employees of the Contractor can commence work at the Company.

Agencies who supply staff to the Company must also complete the pre-employment checks which the Company would otherwise complete for its staff. Again, the Company requires confirmation that these checks have been completed before an individual can commence work at the Company.

The Company will independently verify the identity of staff supplied by contractors or an agency in and will require the provision of the original DBS certificate before contractors or agency staff can commence work at the Company.

Visiting Speakers and Prevent Duty

The Prevent Duty Guidance 2021 (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, 2015) requires the Company to have clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers, whether invited by staff or by learners, are suitable and appropriately supervised.

The Company 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 Company or perform any other regular duties for or on behalf of the Company.

All visiting speakers will be subject to the Company's usual visitors signing in protocol. This will include signing in and out on arrival, the wearing of a visitor's badge at all times and being escorted by a fully vetted member of staff between appointments.

The Company 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 Company. In doing so, the Company will always have regard to the Prevent Duty Guidance and the definition of "extremism" set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) 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 Company 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.

Volunteers

The Company will request an enhanced DBS disclosure and Children's Barred List information on all volunteers undertaking regulated activity with learners at or on behalf of the Company (the definition of regulated activity set out above will be applied to all volunteers).

Under no circumstances will the Company permit an unchecked volunteer to have unsupervised contact with learners.

It is the Company'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 Company for three consecutive months or more. Those volunteers who are likely to be involved in activities with the Company on a regular basis may be required to sign up to the DBS update service as this permits the Company to obtain up to date criminal records information without delay prior to each new activity in which a volunteer participates.

In addition, the Company 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; and
- an informal safer recruitment interview.