

The Willows School Academy Trust



Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy

Reviewed: October 2025
Next Review: October 2026

1. Introduction

This policy has been introduced to provide a framework for the efficient and effective recruitment of all categories of staff at The Willows School Academy Trust.

The Governing Body of the school values the contribution of all staff and recognises that the recruitment of appropriately skilled staff is key to the provision of a safe and successful teaching and learning environment in which pupils can thrive.

The Governing Body is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. Accordingly, this policy complies with the new KCSIE 2025, part 3 Safer Recruitment guidance, regarding the recruitment and selection of staff, Independent School Standards, and other relevant guidance. It is updated in response to staff and governors' recruitment training.

2. Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that newly recruited staff possess the most appropriate blend of qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the demands of the post and the needs of the school.
- To ensure a consistent and equitable approach to the appointment of all staff.
- To ensure that all relevant equal opportunities legislation is adhered to and that appointees are recruited without regard to gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity leave or trade union membership.
- To ensure that all recruitment practices are compliant with DfE safeguarding guidance, with clear links to child protection policies and procedures, thereby ensuring as far as possible that all staff recruited to work in schools are suitable to work with children and young people.
- To ensure the most cost-effective use is made of resources in the recruitment and selection process.

3. Responsibilities

The Governing Body, with appropriate advice from the Headteacher, is responsible for determining the staffing complement of the school and for all appointments to the School Community.

The Headteacher will have delegated responsibility for the appointment of teachers and other staff outside of the leadership group.

Once the selection panel has been agreed, a lead person will be identified, who in conjunction with the panel, will be responsible for drawing up the relevant documentation and planning the selection process.

The selection panel for any position will have responsibility for ensuring that a fair, equitable and non-discriminatory process is maintained throughout the recruitment and selection activities.

4. Safer Recruitment

Matters of child protection, safeguarding and the promotion of the welfare of children will be central to the recruitment process, starting with the planning of recruitment needs through to the recruitment exercise itself. Particular measures to ensure safe recruitment practice, compliant with DfE guidance, are identified throughout this policy. The selection panel have responsibility for ensuring the implementation of these measures. The safeguarding measures noted in this policy are not exhaustive or designed to obviate the need to refer to the most recent DfE guidance.

5. The Planning Process

The Resources Committee of the Governing Body, in conjunction with the Headteacher, will review the staffing requirements of the school annually and assess the short- and long-term recruitment needs so that, as far as possible, a planned approach to resourcing the school can be taken.

Before the start of the recruitment process, there will be a review of the requirements of the specific role. Where a job description or person specification does not exist (e.g. for new posts) then these will be drawn up for agreement by the selection panel.

Job descriptions and person specifications for existing posts will also be reviewed to determine whether the roles and responsibilities of the post need to be revised and to update the necessary qualifications, knowledge, experience, skills or abilities required by the post holder. The person specification will also be assessed to ensure that it does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity leave.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The school has a learning environment that promotes and enhances the positive mental health of the whole school community, recognising that healthy relationships underpin positive mental health and have a significant impact on learning, health and wellbeing. We champion the expectation that 'mental health is everyone's responsibility'.

The Willows School Academy Trust has:

- A clear and agreed ethos and culture that accords value and respect to all.
- A commitment to being responsive to children, carers, families, staff and adults' needs.
- Clearly defined mental health links in school policies.
- Clear guidelines for internal and external referrals.
- Clear signposting in school to enable easy access to internal or external support.
- Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information.
- A named Mental Health Lead

Safeguarding Measures

- A statement of the commitment of the school to the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of pupils will be included in both the job description and the person specification.
- A reference to the duty of staff to prevent harm from Extremism and Radicalisation will be put in the job description and the person specification.
- All job descriptions will make reference to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils. The job description will clearly set out the extent of relationships and contact with children and the degree of responsibility for children that the post holder will have.
- All person specifications will make reference to the need for the job holder to be suitable to work with children. Qualifications, experience, competencies and qualities needed for the role will be identified, along with an explanation of how they will be assessed during the selection process.
- All short-listed applicants will be notified that any relevant issues arising from references will be taken up at interview.

7. The Application Process

For all posts, information packs will be sent to all interested parties or be available as a download from the School's website. The information pack will generally consist of:

- a job description and person specification;
- an application form, including an equality monitoring form, with details for completion;
- a copy of the school's equal opportunities policy statement;
- a copy of the school's child protection policy statement;
- a statement of terms and conditions relating to the post (hours, salary etc);
- information about the recruitment process (interview dates etc);
- any other relevant information regarding the post and the school.

Applications received after the closing date will not be considered, unless the applicant has given prior notice of a late application to the recruiting officer and this has been agreed.

Safeguarding Measures

- All applications must be made using the Application Form for the position to ensure receipt of relevant personal data (including DfE reference number and QTS/QTLS status) educational and employment history, declarations of relationships to existing employees, councillors and governors, details of referees and a statement of personal qualities and experience.
- The Application Form also includes an explanation of posts exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, the filtering rules and the need to declare all unspent convictions, cautions, warnings, bindovers and current police investigations or pending criminal proceedings. Applicants will also need to declare that they are not on the Children's Barred List, disqualified from teaching or subject to sanctions imposed by a regulatory body e.g. GTC, Teaching Agency.

- Details of any unspent convictions, cautions, warnings, bindovers or other relevant information will be attached to the completed application form in a sealed envelope marked as confidential.

6. Advertising

6.1 All posts

All teaching and non-teaching posts will be advertised internally within the school. Where particular skills, experience or qualifications are required or recruitment difficulties are anticipated, posts may additionally be advertised on an appropriate internet jobs site and/or in the local press.

In certain circumstances a post or promotion opportunity will be ring-fenced for current staff in the first instance. Any such ring-fencing will be done in a consistent and transparent manner. Occasionally the decision may be taken not to advertise a post. This may occur, for example, when a similar post has recently been advertised and an appointment can be made from the subsequent interviews, or because a temporary appointment needs to be made as soon as possible to ensure continuity within a post.

6.2 Leadership posts

Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher posts will be advertised as the Governing Body considers most appropriate. As a general rule, such posts will, as a minimum, be advertised on a relevant internet jobs site, and may additionally be advertised in a nationally printed publication. Where there is demonstrable good reason not to advertise, and the Governing Body choose not to do so, the decision making process will be robustly documented to ensure that it will stand up to scrutiny. No final decision regarding the Headteacher post will be made until the local authority has been consulted.

Safeguarding Measures

- All advertisements will include a statement about the school's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and prevention of harm from Extremism and Radicalisation.
- Reference will also be made to the requirement for the successful applicant to undertake an enhanced-level disclosure via the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS).

8. The Selection Process

8.1 The selection panel

A selection panel of at least two people will be set up prior to the shortlisting process. The members of this panel will be comprised of the Headteacher, at least one governor, plus any of the following, as appropriate to the post:

- Deputy and/or Assistant Headteacher
- Line manager for the post

- The local authority's representative (For Headteacher appointments)
- A Personnel Consultant or local authority adviser where particular expertise or guidance is required.

Wherever possible, all panel members will have been trained in and/or have relevant experience of recruitment and selection and interviewing. There must be at least one member of the panel who has undertaken the relevant training.

Where a candidate is known personally to a member of the selection panel this fact should be declared before short-listing takes place. It may then be necessary to change the selection panel to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and that equal opportunities principles are adhered to.

Safeguarding Measures

- At least one member of the panel must have completed safer recruitment training approved by the Secretary of State (e.g. the online training currently provided by the NSPCC).
- At least one member of the panel must have completed Prevent training which places a duty of staff to prevent harm from Extremism and Radicalisation
- Certificates of training are kept in the safeguarding folder in the Headteacher's room.

8.2 Short-listing

Prior to short-listing, the equality monitoring form will be removed and not copied for the short listing panel. If an applicant has requested reasonable adjustments to a part of the selection process to accommodate a disability then this will be notified to the chair of the selection panel.

The short-listing process for interview will determine those applicants who best meet the criteria for the post as outlined in the person specification. Decision making will be based solely on the information available on the application forms.

Shortlisted candidates will be asked to complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children

Where short-listed applicants have declared that they do have a criminal record, and/or have had any sanctions imposed by GTC and/or are not registered with the GTC, then this will be followed up at interview. In certain cases it may be necessary to have a discussion with the applicant prior to the interview.

If a disabled applicant meets the minimum criteria of the person specification then he/she should be short-listed. Advice should also be sought about what reasonable adjustments may be required to enable a disabled applicant to take up post.

Safeguarding Measures

- Incomplete applications will be rejected and may, at the discretion of the selection panel, be returned to the candidate for completion.
- Applications will be monitored for any reference to Extreme or Radical views.
- Notes will be made of any anomalies, discrepancies or gaps in employment so that these can be considered as part of the short-listing process. Reasons for gaps in employment,

repeated career changes, moves from permanent to temporary or supply teaching will also be noted for exploration and verification.

8.3 References

References will be requested for all short-listed candidates (including internal applicants) prior to the interviews. The school will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by not asking questions about a candidate's health or disability as part of these references prior to a job offer being made (this includes information relating to levels of sickness absence which is asked after the job offer has been made). It will be for the selection panel to determine whether the referees given by applicants are suitable and appropriate. Care will be taken in determining whether a referee given by an applicant is suitable. Any applicants currently working in a school environment should give the Headteacher of that school as one referee. References from family members or friends will not be acceptable. References will only be acceptable from the referee. Any references received through an agency recruitment process will be verified by email/written form.

All references subsequently received will be held by the chair of the interview panel who will explore any areas of concern at interview. Once a preferred candidate has been chosen following the interview process, the rest of the interview panel will be given access to the references of that person only, in order to confirm their decision.

Safeguarding Measures

- References will be sought and obtained directly from the referee. References or testimonials provided by the applicant will not be accepted.
- References will seek the necessary relevant and objective information in line with current DfE guidance and a declaration from the referee that the applicant is suitable to work with children.
- All references will be vetted according to current DfE guidance.
- Issues of concern will be raised further with the referee and taken up with the candidate during the interview.
- Where, in exceptional situations references are not received prior to the interview, any concerns will be resolved satisfactorily prior to any unconditional offer of employment.

8.4 Other checks prior to interview

Where a candidate is claiming specific qualifications or previous experience that is relevant to the job but is not verified by reference checks, these will be verified before interview so that any discrepancy can be explored at interview.

8.5 The interview and selection process

Prior to the interview and selection process candidates will be given any relevant information, e.g. details of any selection methods that will be used. Candidates who have a disability or any

other special needs will be given a chance to highlight this prior to the process in order that reasonable adjustments may be made to the recruitment process.

Whilst an interview is always likely to be used as the primary feature of the selection process the selection panel will consider whether any additional selection methods are required to supplement the interview. These may include video submissions, presentations, teaching observation, interaction with pupils, interactions with team members, in-tray exercises, psychometric, verbal or numerical tests, according to the requirements of the role. Any psychometric tests used will have been validated in relation to the job, be free of bias, and be administered and validated only by a suitably trained person.

Whichever methods are chosen, the panel will use these to assess the merits of each candidate against the person specification and explore their suitability to work with children. The selection panel will ensure that all candidates are asked the same main questions at interview based on the list of essential criteria for the post, although supplementary questions may differ according to the candidates' answers and backgrounds.

Particular care needs will be taken to ensure that no questions or selection methods could be viewed as discriminatory. Panel members will all score questions to ensure all review each aspect reviewed by the panel. At least one panel member will record details of the answers given.

Checks are made prior to appointment to see if a prohibition order is in place – Employer Access online Service

Safeguarding Measures

- Invitations for interview will stress that the successful candidate will be subject to thorough identity checks and an Enhanced DBS Check (16+year candidates). Candidates should be requested to bring with them documentation to verify their ID, i.e. passport, driving licence, birth certificate, etc.
- Candidates will be instructed to bring with them to interview any relevant documentation that will confirm educational and professional qualifications. Copies of all documents will be kept on file for successful candidates.
- In addition to assessing the candidate's suitability for the post, the panel will assess the candidate's attitude toward children and young people and his/her ability to support the school's safeguarding agenda and promote the welfare of children and it's duty to prevent harm from Extremism and Radicalisation.
- The candidates attitudes and motivations are explored
- Gaps in employment history and concerns or discrepancies in the application form and references will also be explored.
- Support for British values, and the holding of extreme/terrorist views are explored within the interview process.

9. Job Offers to Successful Candidates

9.1 Job offers

Successful candidates will normally be offered the post verbally, followed by an offer letter as soon as possible afterwards and within one week. Any written offer of appointment will include any terms that the offer is made conditional upon, e.g. satisfactory completion of an occupational health questionnaire, provision of appropriate documentation to verify entitlement to work in the UK (under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006), and other relevant details.

9.2 Conditions of Appointment

Any offer of employment in the school will be conditional upon:

- The receipt of at least two satisfactory references, if not already received;
- Verification of the candidate's identity, if not verified following interview;
- A satisfactory Enhanced DBS Check (including a check of the Children's Barred List);
- Verification of the candidate's fitness to undertake the role;
- Verification of the candidate's right to work in the UK (including a photocopy of the original evidence provided);
- No prohibition or interim orders in place
- Verification of the applicant's qualifications, if not verified following interview;
- Verification of professional status where required e.g. QTS/QTLS status etc; (if this is falsified the professional body must be informed)
- For those gaining QTS after 7 May 1999, verification of successful completion of statutory induction period;
- For support staff posts, satisfactory completion of any required probationary period.
- A disqualification declaration for any family members living in the candidates home.
- For overseas applicants, additional steps are to be carried out to check both convictions and qualifications to ensure the applicant is safe to work with children. To check for criminal convictions, the Academy will request a police clearance certificate or certificate of good conduct from the country where the candidate has lived or worked. If the applicant has spent time in multiple countries, checks will need to be obtained from each relevant country. Once in the UK, the Academy will also carry out an Enhanced check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) once the candidate arrives or has the right to work in the UK. References from previous employers, particularly from schools or organisations that work with children, should also be obtained and carefully reviewed.
- For teaching positions: obtaining a letter from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked, confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions on that person, and/or are aware of any reason why that person may be unsuitable to teach. To verify qualifications, the Academy will request original certificates and confirm their authenticity. If the qualifications were gained overseas, the Academy will check their equivalence to UK standards through organisations such as UK ENIC, which provides information about international qualifications and how they compare to UK qualifications.

If a translation is required it must be from a certified organisation.

Where:

- candidates are found to be on the Children's Barred List, or the DBS check shows that the candidate has been disqualified from working with children;
- an applicant has provided false information in, or in support of, his/her application; or
- there are serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with children;

the facts will be reported to the Disclosure & Barring Service and/or the police, as appropriate

10. Appointment and Promotion of Existing Staff

The school values, and where possible seeks to retain, the skills and contributions of all staff within the school community. The school will support as far as possible the continued professional development of all staff as they seek promotion to new opportunities both within the school and elsewhere. All members of staff are therefore encouraged to consider their suitability for any vacancy within the school. Where a member of staff applies for a vacant post they will be given equal consideration to external candidates, based on the essential criteria for the post.

11. Use of Fixed Term, Temporary or Casual Contracts

Where the Governing Body, in conjunction with the Headteacher, determines that posts are of a short term nature, this will be clearly specified in the job description and on any advertising literature. Posts will only be advertised on a temporary, casual or fixed term basis for genuine temporary reasons. Most temporary, casual or fixed term contracts will come to a natural end. However, where a fixed duration contract expires and the need for the post remains for a further definite period, then the post holder will usually be given an extension to their fixed period contract.

Where the need for a temporary, casual or fixed term post becomes a permanent one, there will be no automatic entitlement for the temporary post holder to be offered the permanent contract. It will be for the Governing Body to consider the most appropriate recruitment process in the circumstances. This could include consideration of the original reason for the post initially being temporary, any subsequent changes in the needs of the school, the original recruitment process that was undertaken, etc.

12. Use of Supply Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

The school workforce is made up of a rich variety of professional and highly skilled and committed people, not all of whom are paid employees. The school values the diversity that this brings to its community as we strive to provide a safe environment and improve the standards of teaching and learning for all pupils. To ensure the continued high standards of contributions, we will:

- Use as our preferred sources of supply staff, agencies accredited through the Quality Mark Scheme for agencies and LAs;

- With appropriate adjustment, adopt similar recruitment measures for contractors as for employees, and for volunteers as for paid staff.
- All volunteers receive training for the role within house. Volunteers are subject to the following:

Safeguarding Measures

Any volunteering opportunity in the School will be conditional upon:

- Verification of the candidate's identity, if not verified following interview;
- A satisfactory Enhanced DBS Check (including a check of the Children's Barred List);
- No prohibition or interim orders in place
- For overseas candidates applications must be made to the Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure.

Where:

- volunteers are found to be on the Children's Barred List, or the DBS check shows that the candidate has been disqualified from working with children;
- there are serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with children;

the facts will be reported to the Disclosure & Barring Service and/or the police, as appropriate

13. Employment of Migrant Workers

The school will not employ, as a member of staff, any individual who cannot demonstrate that he/she has the right to work in the UK, regardless of the individual's colour or apparent race, nationality or ethnic origins. Any employee who has a restricted right to work in the UK will be required to provide evidence of that right at least once in every 12 month period.

The school is not currently licensed to sponsor migrant workers who require sponsorship in order to work in the UK under UK Border Agency rules.

14. Monitoring

Mindful of its commitment to best practice in recruitment and its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and safeguarding of children guidance, the Governing Body will ensure regular monitoring of all recruitment activity. This will be undertaken with a view to improving future recruitment practices and thereby achieving the aims of this policy. The results of this monitoring and any recommended actions will be reported to the Governing Body on an annual basis.

Safeguarding Measures

- Upon employment all staff complete an induction period, in line with the terms and conditions of their contract. This enables staff to access suitability of candidates in the workplace and identify and deal with any behaviour that does not safeguard children and staff.

- All volunteers are monitored to assess suitability of candidates in the workplace and identify and deal with any behaviour that does not safeguard children and staff or prevent harm from Extreme and or Radical views.
- All staff are responsible for maintaining vigilance in relation to safeguarding and raise any concerns in line with safeguarding, competency and whistleblowing policies.

14. Data Protection

Records relating to recruitment and selection activities will remain confidential and accessible only to those who require information either as part of the recruitment decision-making process or for the administration of the process (including monitoring activities for the purposes of this policy or equality policies). Records relating to successful candidates will be placed in personnel files. Records for unsuccessful candidates will be retained in a secure place for a period of six months, after which time they will be destroyed.

Links to:

Safeguarding Policy, Whistleblowing, Staff Capability

Signed: M. Shaw
Headteacher

October 2025