Safer Recruitment Policy

This policy applies to both Oakhill school and the EYFS registered setting.

Introduction

The safe recruitment of staff in schools is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in education. Oakhill School and Nursery is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils in its care. As an employer, Oakhill expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Oakhill takes very seriously its duty of care for all pupils. In order to help safeguard and promote the welfare of all its pupils Oakhill is committed to a thorough and consistent Safer Recruitment Policy.

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

Oakhill is committed to providing the best possible care and education for its pupils and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. This policy outlines the aims of Oakhill which are as follows:

- to ensure that the best possible staff are recruited on the basis of their abilities and suitability for the position;
- to ensure that all job applicants are considered equally and consistently;
- to ensure that all applicants will be treated fairly according to equal opportunities legislation and our recruitment of ex-offenders policy.
- to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations and guidance from the DfE, including Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Prevent Duty Guidance, Independent School Standards and the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service)
- to ensure that Oakhill meets its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people by carrying out all the required regulatory pre-employment checks on staff and volunteers

This policy should also be read alongside the School's Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing Policy, IT Acceptable Use Policy, Data Protection Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy.

The school will ensure recruitment procedures are carried out in accordance with the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Equality Act 2010, UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations and relevant employment legislation.

Employees involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with and complying with the provisions of this policy. Oakhill will always ensure that at least one person on every recruitment panel is trained in safer recruitment and that this training is updated regularly.

Safer recruitment trained staff are the Principal, Vice Principal (Senior), Vice Principal (Prep), Nursery Managers/ Deputy DSLs and Facilities Director /governor.

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 and Prevent Duty Guidance).

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 avoid any involvement in the recruitment and selection decision-making process.

Oakhill aims to operate this procedure consistently and thoroughly while obtaining, collating, analysing and evaluating information from and about applicants applying for job vacancies at Oakhill School.

The school recognises that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and that a culture of vigilance and safer working practice must be embedded throughout all recruitment processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to:

- ensure the School has effective policies and procedures in place for recruitment of all staff and volunteers in accordance with DfE guidance and legal requirements.
- monitor the School's compliance with them.

It is the responsibility of the Principal, and other Managers involved in recruitment to:

- ensure that the School operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure all appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers who work at the School.
- monitor contractors' and agencies' compliance with this document.
- promote welfare of children and young people at every stage of the procedure.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and safeguarding team may be consulted during recruitment processes where safeguarding concerns or suitability issues arise.

Definition of Regulated Activity and Frequency

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

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

Oakhill will check all employees to ensure that they are not barred from working with children prior to appointment. We are required to carry out an enhanced DBS check for all staff, supply staff and governors who will be engaging in regulated activity. However, we 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

All advertisements for employment at Oakhill will carry a clear statement that Oakhill will carry out Enhanced DBS checks on all staff and unsupervised volunteers engaging in ‘regulated activity’. All advertisements will include the statement: “Oakhill is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and all staff must share this commitment.”

In the EYFS and Key Stage One settings, all employees and volunteers, even when supervised, will be required to obtain DBS clearance.

All documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA).

Advertisements, recruitment packs and candidate information will clearly outline the school’s safeguarding commitment and expectations regarding professional conduct and suitability to work with children.

Application Forms

All applicants for employment and volunteers will be required to complete an application form containing questions about their academic and employment history and their suitability for the role. A curriculum vitae will not be accepted in place of an application form. Incomplete application forms will not be accepted. Applicants will be advised that any previous employer may be approached.

The application form will include the applicant's declaration regarding convictions 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 Oakhill 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 Oakhill. 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 DBS.

Application forms will be scrutinised carefully to identify any anomalies, inconsistencies or gaps in employment history, which will be explored further during the selection process.

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

Applicants will receive a job description/ person specification for the role applied for which clearly sets out the duties and responsibilities of the role; makes reference to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and the candidate's suitability to work with children.

Job descriptions and person specifications will clearly identify safeguarding responsibilities appropriate to the role.

Selection Procedure and References

Selection will be made by at least two members of staff, one of whom must have been trained in safer recruitment.

References for short listed applicants will be sent for immediately after short listing. The only exception is where an applicant has indicated on their application form that they do not wish their current employer to be contacted at that stage. In such cases, this reference will be taken up immediately after interview. An online check will also be carried out on any shortlisted candidates and the results recorded. Any concerns will be followed up at interview.

All offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of a minimum of two references which are considered satisfactory by Oakhill. 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 for those posts where the applicant will be working with children. 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. Referees will now also be asked to confirm that the applicant has not been radicalised so that they do not support terrorism or any form of "extremism".

Please note that no questions will be asked about health or medical fitness prior to any offer of employment being made, but a health and fitness questionnaire must be completed on appointment

Any discrepancies or anomalies will be followed up. Oakhill does not accept open references, testimonials or references from relatives.

Online searches on shortlisted candidates will be conducted in accordance with KCSIE guidance and will only assess information relevant to suitability to work with children and professional conduct.

The school will ensure that information obtained through online searches is handled confidentially and in accordance with data protection requirements.

Interview

There will be a face-to-face interview wherever possible, and a minimum of two interviewers will see the applicants for the vacant position. 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 Training).

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.

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 identity, address and qualifications. Original document will only be accepted and photocopies will be taken. Unsuccessful applicant documents will be destroyed after the recruitment programme.

Interview questions will include exploration of safeguarding attitudes, motivation to work with children, professional boundaries and understanding of child protection responsibilities.

Offer of Appointment and New Employee Process

In accordance with the recommendations set out in KCSIE and the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations the School 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 School's standard terms and conditions of employment;

- verification of the applicant's identity (where that has not previously been verified);
- the receipt of two professional references, one of which must be from the applicant's most recent employer.
- for positions which involve "teaching work":
    i. We must be satisfied that the applicant is not, and has never been, the subject of a sanction, restriction or prohibition issued by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), 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 Oakhill or which, in our opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work at the School or Nursery; and
    ii. We are 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 Oakhill or which, in our opinion, renders the applicant unsuitable to work at the School or Nursery;
- where the position amounts to "regulated activity the receipt of an enhanced disclosure from the DBS which Oakhill 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; and
- verification of professional qualifications which the School or Nursery deems a requirement for the post, or which the applicant otherwise cites in support of their application (where they have not been previously verified).

The school may undertake a written risk assessment in circumstances where an individual is permitted to begin work pending the return of a DBS certificate. Appropriate safeguards and supervision arrangements will be put in place and reviewed regularly. This does not apply to staff working in nursery and the EYFS who must have satisfactory DBS clearance before beginning work.

The school will maintain robust systems to ensure all safer recruitment checks are accurately 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 pupils. Therefore, any convictions and cautions that would normally be considered ‘SPENT’ must be declared when applying for any position at Oakhill School.

DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Certificate

The School 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 School 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 Oakhill's policy that the DBS disclosure must be obtained before the commencement of employment of any new employee and if that is not the case that they will be supervised until the disclosure arrives. At the Principal's discretion, a short period of work may be undertaken, without confirming the appointment, after a check of the barred list and all other relevant checks, provided that the DBS application has been made, with appropriate safeguards such as monitored supervision, reviewed weekly using the appropriate supervision form, with evidence kept on the individual staff file. This does not apply to staff working in nursery and the EYFS who must have satisfactory DBS clearance before beginning work.

Members of staff at Oakhill School are aware of their obligation to inform the Principal or their Line Manager of any cautions or convictions that arise between 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.

The school will comply with the DBS Code of Practice and will handle disclosure information confidentially, fairly and securely.

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 per annum, which is payable by the applicant.

Copies of DBS Checks

The DBS no longer issue Disclosure Certificates to employers, therefore employees/applicants should bring their Certificate to the school office (for employees within 7 days of issue or applicants before they commence work or any project involving regulated activity).

Dealing with convictions

The School 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 decision will be made 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 Principal will evaluate all of 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 were it not for the disputed information, the School 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.

The school recognises that a criminal record does not automatically make an individual unsuitable to work within the school and each case will be considered fairly, proportionately and in line with safeguarding responsibilities.

Proof of identity, Right to Work in the UK & Verification of Qualifications and/or professional status

All applicants invited to attend an interview at the School will be required to bring their identification documentation. A birth certificate must be brought, together with items such as a passport, driving licence etc. with them as proof of identity/eligibility to work in UK in accordance with those set out in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006. In line with most recent guidance in KCSIE, where possible we will follow best practice in checking the name on their birth certificate, where this is available. Further identification checking guidelines can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Medical Fitness

The School is legally required to verify the medical fitness of anyone to be appointed to a post at the School, after an offer of employment has been made.

All applicants are requested to complete a medical questionnaire and where appropriate further information 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 School 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 School, 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 record check from the relevant country

Individuals 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, Oakhill will make any further checks as 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
- for teaching positions - a letter of professional standing could be obtained from the professional regulating authority in the country in which the applicant has worked. Advice about which regulatory or professional body applicants should contact is available 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 suitability.
- Where this information is not available, we 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. The applicant will not be permitted to commence work until the overseas information has been received and is considered satisfactory by the School.

Although sanctions and restrictions imposed by another regulating authority do not prevent a person from taking up teaching positions in England, we will consider the circumstances that led to the restriction or sanction being imposed when considering a candidate's suitability for employment.

Further information can be found in DfE Guidance: Recruit teachers from overseas

Induction Programme

All new employees will be given an induction programme which will clearly identify the School and nursery policies and procedures, including the Safeguarding Policy, the role and responsibility of the DSL and deputies, the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education (CME) policy, the Whistle Blowing Policy the ICT Acceptable Use policy, the Code of Conduct (Safer Working Practices),Part One and annex A of KCSIE and make clear the expectations which will govern how staff carry out their roles and responsibilities.

All staff will receive regular safeguarding updates and training, including updates relating to online safety, low-level concerns, filtering and monitoring, Prevent and whistleblowing procedures.

Single Centralised Register of Members of Staff

In addition to the various staff records kept in School 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 2019 requirements. The Single Centralised Register will contain details of the following:-

- all employees who are employed to work at the School;
- all employees who are employed as supply staff to the School whether employed directly or through an agency;
- all others who have been chosen by the School to work in regular contact with children. This will cover volunteers, Governors, peripatetic staff and people brought into the School or nursery to provide additional teaching or instruction for pupils but who are not staff members eg: sports coaches etc.

A designated Governor will be responsible for auditing the Single Centralised Register and reporting his/her findings to the full Governing Body during the annual review of Safeguarding.

Record Retention / Data Protection

Oakhill is legally required to undertake the above pre-employment checks. Therefore, if an applicant is successful in their application, the School or nursery 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 us to discharge its obligations as an employer e.g. so that Oakhill 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 Oakhill for the duration of the successful applicant's employment. All information retained on employees is kept centrally in the School Office in a locked and secure cabinet.

The same policy applies to any suitability information obtained about volunteers involved with School or nursery activities.

Oakhill will retain all interview notes on all unsuccessful applicants after which time the notes will be confidentially destroyed (ie: shredded).

All personal information will be processed and stored in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Access to recruitment records will be restricted to authorised personnel only.

Ongoing Employment

Oakhill 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 School and nursery will therefore provide ongoing training and support for all staff.

The school promotes a culture in which staff feel able to raise concerns about safeguarding practice, conduct or behaviour through appropriate whistleblowing and safeguarding procedures.

Leaving Employment at Oakhill

Should there be any concerns about an employee, systems are in place to ensure the timely renewal of DBS checks. Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service is a legal requirement and therefore standard procedure when a member of staff leaves employment at Oakhill should we consider them to be unsuitable to work with children.

Despite the best efforts to recruit safely there will 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 Oakhill also has a legal duty to make a referral to the DBS in circumstances where an individual:

- has applied for a position despite being barred from working with children; or
- has been removed 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, Oakhill may also decide to make a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).

Contractors and agency staff

Contractors working alone in the school or nursery engaged by Oakhill must complete the same checks for their employees that the School or nursery is required to complete for its staff. Oakhill requires confirmation that these checks have been completed before employees of the Contractor can commence work. All staff of external contractors will be asked to provide a copy of their DBS provided by their employer. They will sign in at the main office on their arrival and sign out on departure. Oakhill 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.

Agencies who supply staff to Oakhill must also complete the pre-employment checks which Oakhill would otherwise complete for its staff. Again, Oakhill requires confirmation that these checks have been completed before an individual can commence work. Supply staff will be added to the Single Central register to show that these checks have been verified.

Governors

All new governors will be registered with the DBS and be subject to a section 128 check before they take up their new post.

Visiting Speakers

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

Oakhill 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 nursery or perform any other regular duties for or on behalf of Oakhill.

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

Oakhill 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 Oakhill. In doing so, Oakhill will always have regard to the Prevent Duty Guidance and the definition of "extremism" set out in KCSIE.

In fulfilling its Prevent Duty obligations, Oakhill 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

Oakhill 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 Oakhill (the definition of regulated activity set out above will be applied to all volunteers).

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

It is the Oakhill's policy that a new DBS certificate is required for volunteers who will engage in regulated activity. Those volunteers who are likely to be involved in activities with Oakhill on a regular basis may be required to sign up to the DBS update service as this permits Oakhill to obtain up to date criminal records information without delay prior to each new activity in which a volunteer participates.

In addition, Oakhill 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.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team will review this policy regularly to ensure it remains compliant with current legislation, statutory guidance and best practice.

Reviewed: April 2024 **Jane Buttery Updated: May 2026**