Widford Lodge

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

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Safer Recruitment Policy

This policy applies to all pupils at Widford Lodge School including those in the EYFS

Reviewed and approved by Proprietor: September 2026
Next review: September 2027

This policy is made available to all parents, prospective parents, staff and prospective employees of Widford Lodge Preparatory School on our school website and a paper copy is always available from the school office.

Introduction

This Safer Recruitment Policy applies to all aspects of Widford Lodge Preparatory School's work, including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The Proprietor, Headteacher and staff of Widford Lodge Preparatory School are committed to providing the best possible care and education to its pupils and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We are also committed to providing a supportive working environment for all members of staff. We recognise that, in order to achieve these aims, it is of fundamental importance to attract, recruit and retain staff of the highest calibre, who share this commitment.

The aims of our Safer Recruitment Policy are to:

- comply with all relevant recommendations and guidance including the recommendations of the Department for Education (DfE) in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- safeguard and promote the welfare of children by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks

- deter prospective candidates who are unsuitable to work with children

- identify and reject applicants who are unsuitable to work with children

- give clarity to all those applying for posts so that the school can recruit the best possible staff on the basis of their merits, abilities and suitability for the position

- support our Equal Opportunities policy by ensuring that all job applicants are considered equitably and consistently, so that no applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds, including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, disability or age.

Members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are responsible for complying with the provisions of this policy. Whenever we are involved in the appointment procedure for any staff post, at least one member of the recruitment panel will hold a current certificate in Safer Recruitment from the Local Authority.

We recognise that our safer recruitment processes apply to all staff, volunteers, club providers and contractors.

1. **Recruitment and Selection Procedure**

Advertisements for posts, whether in newspapers, journals or on-line, will include a statement to the effect that:

Widford Lodge Preparatory School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and applicants must support this commitment themselves and be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post including checks with employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Prospective applicants will be supplied with the following:

- Job description and person specification, which will include the skills, abilities, experience, attitude and behaviours required as well as the safeguarding responsibilities of the post
- An application form.

All applicants for employment will be required to complete the application form. Incomplete application forms will not be accepted. Curriculum vitae will not be accepted in place of the completed application form under any circumstances. The application form contains a short form privacy notice advising applicants how their personal data will be processed. It also states that it is an offence to apply for the role if the applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.

Short-Listing and References

At least two people, one of whom is a member of the SLT, will be involved in scrutinising application forms. Short-listing of applicants will be against the person specification for the post. Information concerning age, medical history, disability or criminal records will not be used to

short-list candidates. An online search will be carried out as part of the school's due diligence on the shortlisted candidates.

References will be taken up on short-listed candidates prior to interview. All offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of a minimum of two satisfactory references, one of which 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 referee should be from the employer with whom the applicant most recently worked with children.

Neither referee should be a relative or someone known to the applicant solely as a friend, unless, for example the applicant is a recent school/college leaver and has not previously been in work or where the applicant has not worked for a significant period of time. References should be from a senior person with appropriate authority and if the referee is school or college based, the reference must be from the Headteacher or confirmed by them as accurate with regard to disciplinary investigations. All referees will be sent a copy of the job description and person specification for the role for which the applicant has applied. They will also be asked to confirm the following:

- the applicant's dates of employment, salary, job title/duties, reason for leaving, performance and disciplinary record
- the applicant's suitability for the post in general
- the applicant's suitability for working with children
- whether the applicant has ever been the subject of disciplinary procedures, including warnings involving issues related to the safety and welfare of children (including any in which the disciplinary sanction has expired)
- whether any substantiated allegations or concerns have been raised about the applicant that relate to the safety and welfare of children or behaviour towards children and meet the harm threshold.

We will normally only accept references obtained directly from the referee on our official reference form with all sections completed. We will not accept references or testimonials provided by the applicant or on open references or testimonials.

We will compare all references with any information given on the application form. Any discrepancies, inconsistencies or concerns in the information will be taken up with the applicant before any appointment is confirmed.

Where necessary, referees will be contacted by telephone or e-mail in order to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies; a detailed written note will be kept of such exchanges. Where necessary, previous employers who have not been named will be contacted in order to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies; a detailed written note will be kept of such exchanges. We routinely telephone referees to confirm their identity and the contents of their reference provided, thereby also verifying that electronic references received originate from a legitimate source.

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.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing. Successful applicants will be invited to an interview.

Interviewing Candidates

At least one member of the SLT will be involved in the interview process and at least one person in the interview will have successfully completed Safer Recruitment Training provided by the Local Authority.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to attend a formal, face-to-face interview where their relevant skills and experience will be discussed in more detail. Candidates will always be required to:

- explain any gaps or frequent changes in their employment or location history satisfactorily
- explain any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to the recruiters
- declare any information that is likely to appear on a DBS disclosure
- demonstrate their capacity to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people and to explore any potential areas of concern to determine their suitability to work with children
- answer questions aimed at obtaining evidence of how the candidate meets the criteria listed on the person specification; the same areas of questioning will be covered for each candidate

- answer questions aimed at obtaining evidence of how the candidate would aim to fulfil the roles and responsibilities as detailed in the job description and examples of experience of working with children, as relevant to the role
- answer questions aimed at obtaining evidence of the candidate's motives, attitudes and behaviour in relation to the role
- all prospective teachers/learning support assistants will be required to demonstrate their ability to carry out their duties
- all teaching posts will include the teaching of a lesson to children of an appropriate age, all support roles will have key skills assessed
- all prospective teachers, pre school staff, learning support assistants and office staff will also have a supervised interview with pupils from the School Council.

All candidates who are invited to interview will be required to bring the following evidence of identity, address and qualifications:

- current photograph driving licence and full birth certificate OR current passport (where an applicant claims to have changed his/her name by deed poll or any other means, e.g. marriage, adoption, statutory declaration, he/she will be required to provide documentary evidence of the change)
- two utility bills or statements (from different sources) showing their name and home address
- Documentation confirming their National Insurance Number (P45, P60 or NI card)
- Original documents confirming any educational and professional qualifications referred to in their application form, including, for teachers, proof of Qualified Teacher Status. If there is any doubt of authenticity, the relevant awarding body will be contacted
- Proof of eligibility to work in the United Kingdom

Unsuccessful candidates will be informed in writing. When requested, feedback will be given.

The successful candidate's notes will be kept on file for the duration of their employment and for a minimum of six years afterwards.

2. Conditional Offer of Employment

If it is decided to make an offer of employment following the 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
- the receipt of two satisfactory references as detailed above (if not already received)
- verification of professional status, as appropriate, such as NQT status, via the DfE's Check a Teacher's Record service
- a declaration of mental and physical fitness in accordance with the Education (Health Standards (England)) Regulations 2003 and DCSF Circular 4/99 Physical and Mental Fitness to Teach of Teachers and Entrants to Initial Teacher Training i.e. that the candidate knows of no reasons, on grounds of mental or physical health, why they should not be able to discharge the responsibilities required by the post in question.
- satisfactory completion of the probationary period, as detailed in the contract
- In addition to these checks and, in accordance with the recommendations of the DfE in Keeping Children Safe in Education the School applies for a new enhanced DBS. The individual applicant receives the certificate for an enhanced DBS check with barred list information and must show the original of this to the school before they take up post. Alternatively, if the applicant subscribes to the DBS update service, the school will apply for the check via this service but will examine the original certificate to ensure it is valid for the children's workforce. Disclosure will contain details of all convictions on record including current and spent convictions, (including those which are defined as 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) together with details of any cautions, reprimands or warnings held on the Police National Computer. It may also contain non-conviction information from local police records which a chief police officer thinks may be relevant in connection with the matter in question.
- A further check will also be made for applicants to posts including teachers, learning support assistants, pre-school staff and peripatetic staff; the school will check that there is no prohibition order against the applicant, using the DfE's Check a teacher's record service.

- A declaration in line with the Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 that the applicant has not: been cautioned for or convicted of certain violent and sexual criminal offences against children and adults; any grounds relating to the care of children (including where an order is made in respect of a child under the person's care); had registration refused or cancelled in relation to childcare or children's homes or been disqualified from private fostering.
- A check via the GOV.UK website that the teaching applicant (and for other appropriate roles) is not subject to a section 128 Prohibition from management.
- As the individual is applying for a position working with children or young adults, the barred list check will also reveal whether he/she is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults by virtue of his/her inclusion on the lists of those considered unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults maintained by the DfE and the Department of Health.
- For applicants with recent periods of overseas residence and those with little or no previous UK residence, we will also apply for the equivalent of a disclosure, where one is available in the relevant jurisdiction (s) and we will make any further appropriate checks so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered. This will include anyone who has lived or worked overseas for more than three months in the last 10 years.

If the above conditions are satisfied and the offer is accepted then the applicant will be issued with a contract of employment as confirmation of employment.

Should an individual be allowed to start work in regulated activity before their DBS certificate has been seen by the school, this can only take place if all other checks have been carried out, including a separate children's barred list check, and a risk assessment involving appropriate supervision is implemented; this is not applicable to early years staff, who cannot start work in regulated activity until the enhanced DBS check has been seen by the school.

If a candidate is found to be on the DfE List 99 or Barred List, or if the enhanced DBS disclosure shows he or she has been disqualified from working with children by a court, or if he or she is subject to a prohibition order or is found to have provided false information in his or her application, or if he or she is the subject of serious expression of concern as to his or her suitability to work with children, these facts will be reported to the Police and the DfE Children's Safeguarding Unit.

3. **Criminal records checks for short-notice supply teachers**

Should we need to use staff from a supply agency, we will ask the agency to confirm that they have carried out all relevant checks including: identity, enhanced disclosure, right to work in the UK, barred list/list 99, prohibition from teaching, qualifications, overseas checks, disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006. The identity of all supply teachers, using either a current passport or a birth certificate and a current photo-card driving license, and sight of their disclosure certificate, will be checked upon their arrival at school and before they are allowed to teach. We do not currently use staff from supply agencies.

4. **Induction**

All newly appointed staff will undergo a programme of induction training relevant for their post. In addition to this all members of staff, whether teaching or support staff, will undergo induction training which will specifically address issues concerning the safeguarding of children and young people and the procedures detailed in the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

5. **Disclosure and Barring Service**

The Disclosure and Barring Service's (DBS) role is to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. We are required to report to the DBS within one month of leaving the school any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer, trainee teacher or student) whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children. Widford Lodge Preparatory School understands that, in this context, ceasing to use a person's services includes dismissal, non-renewal of a fixed-term contract, no longer engaging/refusing to engage a supply teacher provided by an employment agency, terminating the placement of a student teacher or other trainee, no longer using staff employed by contractors, no longer using volunteers, resignation, and voluntary withdrawal from supply teaching, contract working, a course of initial teacher training or volunteering. We undertake that our reports will include as much evidence about the circumstances of the case as possible. We understand that 'Compromise Agreements' cannot apply in this connection.

6. **Contractors and Club Leaders**

The recruitment procedures outlined above will also be applied to club leaders and contractors. Where contractors are employed, for example for cleaning services or as representatives of

organisations such as sports coaches, we will always carry out identity checks and will require the employee to complete our induction and safeguarding processes. We will also obtain confirmation in advance of the starting date of the post from the employing organisation that they have carried out all required checks in accordance with this policy. Club leaders who are not employed by a contracting organisation will be treated by us as an employee and all recruitment and induction checks as outlined in this policy will be carried out in advance of the start date of the club.

7. Visiting Speakers

In accordance with the Prevent strategy and our Safeguarding policy, we have procedures in place to ensure that visiting speakers and the content of their speeches are suitable and that they are appropriately supervised whilst at school. These procedures include the completion of a checklist and checking ID and are outlined in our Educational Visits policy.

8. **Volunteers**

Where volunteers are appointed by us to listen to children read or to provide other support, they will be treated as employees with full recruitment checks undertaken as we recognise that they will be categorised as carrying out regulated activity.

9. **Referral to the Secretary of State**

Where we dismiss or cease to use the services of a teacher because of serious misconduct or might have done had they not left first, we will consider whether to refer the case to the Secretary of State.

APPENDIX I.

Policy statement on recruiting applicants with criminal records

This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore applicants are required to declare:

- All unspent conditional cautions or convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- All spent adult cautions (simple or conditional) or spent convictions that are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended)

It is important that applicants understand that failure to disclose all cautions, convictions, reprimands or final warnings that are not protected could result in disciplinary proceedings or dismissal.

Further advice and guidance on disclosing a criminal record can be obtained from Criminal Record Support Service | Nacro

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, Widford Lodge School undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

Widford Lodge School is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background and is aware of its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.

This written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders is made available to all disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process. We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records.

We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.

Due to the special requirements of a school, all offers of employment are subject to an enhanced check for regulated activity. All application forms and job adverts will contain a statement that a Criminal Record declaration will be requested in the event of the individual being invited for interview, we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process, and a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the applicant being offered the position.

We ensure that all those in Widford Lodge School who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably briefed to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. 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 by employers and cannot be taken into account. Guidance and criteria for these can be found at the Disclosure and Barring Service website.

At interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure

to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment or summary dismissal if this information emerged after appointment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offences. Under the relevant legislation, it is unlawful for the School to employ anyone who is included in 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 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 a relevant setting and is disqualified from providing childcare under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009, whether by association or otherwise.

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;
- It 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 the relevant information (whether in relation to previous convictions or otherwise) is volunteered by the applicant during the recruitment process or obtained through a disclosure 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;
- 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
- The circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation offered by the convicted person.

If the post involves regular contact with children, it is the School's normal policy to consider it high risk to employ anyone who has been convicted at any time of any of the following offences: murder, rape, manslaughter, 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.

SD2 CRIMINAL RECORD DECLARATION FORM FOR JOBS EXEMPT FROM THE ROA

You have been asked to complete this form because the role you have applied for is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974. The information disclosed on this form will not be kept with your application form during the application process.

Criminal record declaration form (exempt positions)

Surname:		**First name:**	
Role applied for:			

- Do you have any unspent conditional cautions or convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Do you have any adult cautions (simple or conditional) or spent convictions that are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended)? Yes ☐ No ☐

If you have answered yes to either question, you now have two options for disclosing your criminal record:

Option 1: You can disclose your criminal record on a separate sheet provided that you mark a cross on the line below and attach the details in an envelope stapled to this form. The envelope should be marked CONFIDENTIAL and state your name and details of the post.
I have attached details of my conviction separately _____ (please mark with an X if appropriate.)

Option 2: Please provide details in the space below.

DECLARATION
I declare that the information provided on this form is correct.
I understand that the declaration of a criminal record will not necessarily prevent me from being offered this role at Widford Lodge School

Signed: **Date:**

Please return this form to: Headteacherpa@widfordlodge.co.uk

If you are unsure about how to answer the questions on this form, please contact **National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO)** Criminal Record Support Service on 0300 123 1999 or helpline@nacro.org.uk. All enquiries to this service are confidential. You will not be asked for any personal details, unless you want information or advice sent to you.