

International Taskforce on Child Protection

Safer Recruitment Checklist

February 2024

This checklist outlines how schools can significantly mitigate risks to students through the use of safer recruitment practices.

Context

In 2016, the International Taskforce on Child Protection (ITFCP) led a global consultative process to develop a safer recruitment checklist for international school recruitment of school personnel, including educational and operational staff.

The ITFCP 2021 [Expectations](#) include a requirement for the school to have recruitment policies and rigorous operational procedures to ensure to the extent possible that all adults who interact with children (including employees, volunteers and governing board members/owners) are suitable to work safely with and protect the students in their care.

In 2023, this checklist was reviewed and updated by a broad range of ITFCP volunteers, reflecting the collective expertise of educational practitioners and specialist experts across multiple sectors.

Note

Nothing in this document constitutes, or should be construed as, legal advice. Schools are advised to consider these recommendations and their specific legal and cultural contexts. It is strongly recommended that schools seek legal advice before making any changes to their current practices, to ensure compliance with relevant local and international laws.

In Preparation for the Recruitment Process

- The school's commitment to child safeguarding is contextual and clearly visible on its public website:

“Aligned with the recommendations of the International Taskforce on Child Protection, we hold ourselves to a high standard of effective recruiting practices with specific attention to child protection.”

- A child safeguarding commitment statement is included in all job descriptions and advertisements, for example:

“Our school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and have developed and adopted written guidelines (Code of Conduct) for appropriate and inappropriate behavior of adults towards children.

We expect all staff, volunteers and other third parties to share this commitment and to review and affirm that they have read, understood, and will abide by the Code of Conduct.

At our school, we use safer recruitment practice and pre-employment background checks, to maintain the highest standards of safeguarding and child safety.

Our school's practices reflect and are aligned with the written Expectations of the International Taskforce on Child Protection.”

Please review the school's safer recruitment policy. [Insert link.]

- School policy requires proof of identity and teaching credentials from all applicants.
- At least one interviewer has completed safer recruitment training and documents how and when they were last trained.
- Initial interviews with applicants include child safeguarding questions (see Appendix A for examples).
- The interview notes are recorded and retained. The interviewer signs and dates the interview.
- References are taken prior to interview, if legally permitted. If not legally permitted, employment offers are contingent upon the completion of positive reference checks.
- Current/former employees are informed that the school will disclose findings of any known misconduct and/or documented reason(s) for dismissal when contacted for references, in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

- The school has a comprehensive, secure, transparent and centralized record-keeping system in place to maintain and retain safeguarding-related documentation for all faculty and staff, in accordance with applicable legal requirements. The school's central safeguarding register is reviewed quarterly by the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Child Protection Officer.
- The school regularly reviews and refines its Safer Recruitment policy and practices, seeking ongoing community consultation which includes student input.
- The Human Resources team has completed safer recruitment training.

During the Recruitment Process

Policy

- School safeguarding and child protection policies include a safer recruitment policy including clearly written recruitment and selection procedures including a process for the review and validation of references.
- Personnel who carry out the recruitment and selection process include two or more people whose names are recorded in each applicant's file.
- The school's commitment to safeguarding and safer recruitment is communicated throughout the process including recruitment presentations, individual meetings and written communications.
- The school documents and maintains comprehensive files for applicants, candidates and employees, in accordance with applicable legal requirements.
- The school maintains full responsibility for adherence to safer recruitment practices, whether conducted by the school or through the work of a recruitment agency.

Application form

- An application form is used to collect and document each applicant's full work history. See Appendix A for examples of questions that can be asked on the application form.
- A CV is not accepted in place of an application form.
- The application form should require a list of all qualifications earned and a complete employment history, including dates, with any gaps in employment explained. At each stage, the reason for leaving a job should be recorded.

- The application form should include the opportunity to disclose any criminal offences and / or involvement in disciplinary procedures including outcomes, subject to applicable legal requirements.
- The application will be cross-referenced with additional checks and information.

References

The application form should ask for the names and contact details of three referees, one being the current or most recent employer. All referees should be from people who supervised the applicant (minimally at the Assistant Principal level). References should be obtained directly from the school(s) where the applicant worked. If a referee is now working in a new setting, the reference should be provided by the school's Human Resource department. Key point: Referees must be able to verify whether or not any low-level concerns existed about the applicant's behaviour.

Note: In some instances, an Assistant Principal may not be aware of child protection concerns that were raised about the individual for whom they are asked to provide a reference. Schools requesting a reference should clearly state on each reference request that referees should be in a position to comment on the candidate's suitability to work with children. Schools can also encourage referees, where appropriate, to ask the school head or human resources department whether there is any information about the applicant which should be included in the reference. Effective school practice requires the head of each school where references are being checked to approve the reference before it is provided to the hiring school or to a recruitment agency representing the applicant.

- The application form should clearly state that the recruiter reserves the right to contact all previous employers and that the recruiter will contact the last workplace where the applicant interacted directly with children.
- The application form should include specific minimum information for each referee (i.e. name, current role and business email address, role in relation to applicant and dates covered).
- The recruiter or school verifies each referee's title, role and relationship with the applicant. Referee identities and contact details are checked via professional directories where possible, including web search and social media. The dates provided are checked against applicant history and open sources.
- The school sends a reference pro forma (questionnaire) to each referee which includes questions about the applicant's suitability to work with children (see Appendix A for examples). Referees should be able to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children and will be asked to explicitly state whether or not any substantiated allegations were made.
- The school follows up on a minimum of two of the written references by phone or video call, to verify that the referee wrote the reference, and to follow up any concerns or queries. Reference verification calls should be made by the same person.

- Contact with referees should be made through a school phone number and or verified school email address and should be documented in writing.
- Open letters of reference ('To whom it may concern') are not acceptable.
- References may be requested at different stages but where possible should always be available before the final interviews, so that any problems can be raised.
- When references are received, they should be scrutinized against the information provided on the application form to verify whether or not the applicant has worked continuously without gaps. If gaps exist, queries should be made as to the circumstances.
- Should an 'agency' be listed as a reference, contact should be made with the agency personnel representing the applicant.

Interview

- The interview process includes:
 - a consistent interviewer/panel for all applicants for each position;
 - child safeguarding-related questions probing specific cases/scenarios and the applicant's awareness and mindset on child abuse prevention, recognition, intervention, and reporting during the first round of applicant interviews;
 - a safeguarding question specifically relevant to the role;
 - questions to probe short term positions, moving from paid to unpaid roles, gaps in employment, career changes; and
 - detailed notes of all interviews taken by the interviewer/panelists during the interview, stored in each applicant's file, and;
 - the interview panel should affirm the outcome in writing, using an agreed format for the documentation and review of interview notes for the files.

Shortlisting

- All applications should be scrutinized for dates of employment and any gaps or discrepancies, and link to the person specification and job description.
- At least two people who have completed safer recruitment training should be involved in this process and the applications should be judged against agreed criteria, which includes safeguarding.

Pre-employment checks

- Where the in-country laws permit, the school conducts an internet and social media search (for example, on Google) of each applicant including all variations of names listed on their application. Searches include the words “child protection” and “safeguarding” and the names of current or previous schools.
- The school reviews sex offender websites (if they exist) for each of the countries and local jurisdictions where the applicant has lived.
- The school reviews any teacher prohibition lists¹ in the country where the applicant qualified as a teacher. This review is applicable even if the applicant is applying for a non-teaching position.
- The school conducts criminal record checks that include, where possible, all countries where applicants have lived for 6 months or more within the previous 10 years (including their home country, if appropriate). ‘Cautions’ or ‘words of warning’ are investigated further.
- If available, ‘enhanced’ police background checks are required.
- Where it is not possible to carry out a check for one or more of these countries, additional measures are put in place to compensate for this gap. For example, an additional reference may be sought.
- For a comprehensive list of country specific guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants>
- The school verifies the applicant’s current teaching certification (if required) and educational diploma/transcript of their highest-level qualification, reviewing the original documents where possible.
- The school requests copies of the applicant’s birth certificate and passport(s) to check if their name has changed by any legal means (identity card, birth certificate, marriage/divorce, passport verification, etc.) Passport numbers should be checked against police certificates for date and number discrepancies.

Onboarding

- The school offers conditional letters of employment including:
 - a declaration of full disclosure and acknowledgment that the employment agreement and subsequent employment may be terminated immediately for misrepresentation; and

¹ A number of countries offer ‘prohibition checks’ which enable schools to check whether an individual has been found, by the agency that issued their teacher qualification, to be unsuitable to work with children, and placed on a ‘prohibition list’.

- the contract offer is contingent on the successful completion of all criminal record and background checks.
- The school maintains a comprehensive, secure, centralized safeguarding record-keeping system which includes all applicant and employee recruitment and selection documents in compliance with the country's legal system.
- School volunteers, contractors, faculty and staff undergo regular, systematic professional training on student safeguarding in all educational environments for which they are responsible, including boarding facilities, homestay, residential arrangements, excursions, trips and student exchanges. Topics include child abuse prevention, recognition, intervention, and reporting.
- The school's Code of Conduct for faculty and staff, including a section on disciplinary procedures, is reviewed and signed alongside the employment contract. These include clear statements of unacceptable conduct which may lead to suspension and/or dismissal.
- Safeguarding training is provided to everyone before they begin working directly with students.
- The school should have an on-boarding and induction program which includes student safeguarding and how to manage concerns and allegations about adults who work with children. Supervision and the appraisal cycle should include discussion of safeguarding understanding and professional development needs.

Appendix

Example Questions in an Application Form

Personal information

Name	Address
Aliases or other names used (current and past)	Secondary Address
Date of Birth	Phone Number
Citizenship	Email Address
Secondary Citizenship	Country of Residence
Teacher/Educator Reference Number (if one exists)	Total # years living outside of country of birth

Education / Credentials

Education (Institution/Degree/Date)	Certification/License (Country/State/Region/Province/Expiration Date)
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Work History / Experience

Name of School (Employer/Address)	Dates of Employment
Reason(s) for Leaving	Eligibility for Re-employment
Explanation for any gaps in work history	Curriculum Experience

Example Applicant Interview Questions

1. Can you give an example of something that you have done that demonstrates your commitment to protecting a child or a young person?
2. Can you give an example of a time when you became aware of someone acting unprofessionally at work? What did you do? How did you feel about what you had to do?
3. Can you give us an example of finding it difficult working with someone [in a team] who did not share your values, beliefs or ideas? Why do you think you found it difficult? How did you feel about it? What did you do to resolve the situation?
4. Can you tell me/ us about a situation when you saw someone at work stretch or bend the rules beyond what you felt was acceptable? What action did you take?
5. What are your attitudes towards child protection – how have these developed over time?
6. What are your feelings about students who make allegations against staff?
7. Can you tell me/us about a time when you had to conform to a policy or procedure you did not agree with - what did you do?
8. Role specific: Ask a question related to the safeguarding requirements for the role applied for.
9. Country specific: Ask a question to probe the applicant's attitude, values and beliefs related to local culture and practice.
10. If gaps in employment exist: Can you tell us the reasons that you left work for a period of time?

Example Referee Questions

1. Do you have any concerns about the applicant working unattended with children?
2. Did any of the applicant's colleagues, students or parents express such concerns?
3. Would you rehire the applicant? (why or why not according to the response received)
4. Do you have any concerns about the applicant's behavior around children or young people?
5. Have there been any allegations or concerns raised about the applicant involving issues related to the safety and welfare of children, child protection, young people or colleagues, including any disciplinary action?
6. How were these matters investigated and resolved?
7. Were any sanctions put in place - please describe - do any of these remain in force?
8. Please see the job description and person specification attached and comment on the applicant's suitability to carry out this position.