



A learning and caring community
where individuals are valued

4D: SAFER RECRUITMENT & SELECTION POLICY

Reviewed by: HR Manager/SMT Feb 2020
Ratified by Trustees: TBC – June 2020
Date of Review: Feb 2021
EDI Review: Please see section 5 for details

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The Sheiling Special Education Trust (SSET) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and requires all staff to act in the best interests of our young people at all times.

1. Introduction

SSET recognises its duty under the Education Act 2005 to make arrangements to ensure that functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014

We follow current Department for Education (DfE) guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' (2019), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018), HM Government advice 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2015) and the Local Safeguarding Children Board's policies, procedures, guidance and protocols.

As a Children's Home, SSET also follows The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, including Quality Standards.

As a provider of care and education for young adults, we comply with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the Further Education (Providers of Education) (England) Regulations 2006, Department of Health's policy framework of *No Secrets* (2000 and 2011 guidance, updated 2015) and the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, including the Fundamental Standards (2015).

We use robust recruitment and vetting procedures to help deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children, or are otherwise unsuited to work with them. We will also take immediate action where we believe an individual may be at risk, or it is alleged that a child is suspected of being abused. Our primary concern, at all times, is the welfare and safety of all members of SSET's community including young people, staff and visitors.

This policy and all associated procedures apply to all staff, including vocational workers, and should be read in conjunction with other safeguarding, volunteering and employment policies in place at The Sheiling Ringwood.

2. The advertising of posts

The occurrence of a vacancy, or creation of a new position, will normally be advertised within the setting, on The Sheiling Ringwood's website, the Universal Job Match, (Department of Employment Job Centre partner) other websites, as appropriate, and the local press. Senior posts may also be advertised in the national press.

All advertisements will make clear:

- our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people
- the need for the successful applicant to undertake a range of vetting checks including a criminal record check, and where appropriate the Barred List check, via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Other information will include the post title, salary and experience/qualifications necessary for the post.

3. Candidate information

All prospective employees are directed to apply online via the SSET website to provide for consistency in information gathered per candidate. The job description, person specification and associated recruitment policy guidance notes are also posted online and candidates are directed to familiarise themselves with these. The documents provided make clear the SSET's position regarding its Safer Recruitment processes and the safeguarding expectations upon staff.

All applicants must complete the application in full, which includes the opportunity for the applicant to pre-disclose any criminal record. We will not accept a Curriculum Vitae in place of an application form. However, applicants may attach relevant supplementary information and/or documents.

Where appropriate, potential employees may be offered the opportunity to visit the setting prior to short-listing or as part of the interview and assessment process.

4. Visits to SSET

Visits by potential employees are actively encouraged and form a valuable part of our recruitment and selection process. Candidates are given the opportunity to make a supervised visit to meet with students and other staff and obtain contextual information relevant to the position. The member of staff hosting the visit will always be someone who has the necessary expertise and experience to answer any queries raised.

5. Equality and diversity

SSET adheres to a policy of equality and diversity and all applications will be considered on the basis of the knowledge, understanding, skills, qualifications and experience required to undertake the roles and responsibilities of the post coupled with demonstrable motivation and personal values in keeping with the ethos of The Sheiling Ringwood.

We welcome applications from all sectors of the community, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation. The Sheiling Ringwood has signed up to the Disability Confident programme.

Opportunities for part time work may be limited due to staffing requirements, yet if within recognised rota patterns will be considered, and this could adversely affect applicants with child care responsibilities.

6. Short-listing

All applications are scrutinised to ensure that:

- they are fully and properly completed
- the information provided is consistent and does not contain any discrepancies
- any gaps in employment are identified and/or reasons for leaving previous care and/or education based employment

Incomplete applications are not normally accepted and may be rejected without further consideration.

Any anomalies, discrepancies or gaps in employment, identified by the scrutiny, are noted and will be taken into account when considering whether to short-list the applicant.

Short-listing for interview is normally conducted by members of the interview panel and is based on the information presented in the completed application measured against the criteria detailed in a person specification. Short-listing decisions are recorded in a specified format.

7. References

The purpose of seeking references is to obtain objective and factual information to support appointment decisions. As a general rule, references will be taken up before interview. For further information, see Appendix 3.

8. Interview and assessment

Candidates are normally interviewed by a panel whose number and experience vary according to the nature and seniority of the position advertised. The lead member of every appointment panel will have successfully completed safer recruitment training.

Additional competency and/or suitability selection exercises will be included, where appropriate.

For further information on **interview format**, see Appendix 1.

9. Pre-appointment checks

An offer of appointment to a successful candidate, including one who has lived or worked abroad, must be conditional upon satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks. For further information, see Appendix 2.

An applicant's fitness for the duties required will also be subject to appropriate medical assessment.

Where a pre-appointment check generates a disclosure which may impact on the candidate's suitability for appointment, the matter will be subject to further review and assessment by the relevant member of the Senior Management Team and/or SSET's DSL in collaboration with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

10. Employment of ex-offenders

The suitability for employment of a person with a criminal record will vary depending on the nature of the job and the details and circumstances of any convictions. For further information, see Appendix 4.

11. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Barred List checks/rechecks

All employees are obliged to undertake an Enhanced DBS and Barred List check. Volunteers, Consultants and Contractors are obliged to undertake the relevant and permitted level of DBS check, dependant on their role. Candidates who are current subscribers to the DBS Update Service in respect of Enhanced DBS and relevant Barred List, are required to give consent for the organisation to carry out instant checks online and produce their original DBS certificate together with photographic identification. It is a condition of employment that staff join the DBS Update Service upon recruitment.

Online DBS checks will normally be conducted every year for members of staff, volunteers and self-employed consultants who remain engaged with the organisation. All staff are required, without delay, to disclose to their line manager or HR any incidents in their personal lives that may have an adverse impact on their ability to work in a regulated activity. However, where we have concerns about an existing staff

member's suitability to work with children and young people, we will carry out all relevant checks as if the person were a new member of staff.

All employees are required to subscribe to the DBS Service as a condition of their employment.

12. Overseas Criminal Record Check/Certificate of Good Conduct

Overseas criminal record checks or a Certificate of Good Conduct will be required for applicants who are foreign nationals or UK nationals who have lived or spent time abroad. Where such a check is not obtainable, a suitability assessment, taking into account references, employment and education history and interview responses, will be undertaken, for consideration by the Principal or nominated substitute, before any offer of employment is made.

13. Agency workers

All agencies used to supply temporary staff, typically care support workers, teachers, teaching support staff and administrative or auxiliary staff, are required to certify in writing that supply workers have the necessary clearance to fulfil the assignment role.

This will normally include:

- an enhanced DBS and Barred List check (Adult and Children's Workforce) obtained within the immediately preceding 12 month (care staff) or 36 month (supply teachers) period (which must be presented for verification upon first date of engagement)
- the Right-to-Work in the UK
- overseas Criminal Record Check or Certificate of Good Conduct, if appropriate
- professional registration subject to role
- suitable qualifications and verified experience for the duties required

The agency will also be required to complete an agreed Agency Worker Profile, including certifying that suitable references have been obtained and any gaps in employment suitably explained in accordance with the relevant legislation, regulation and statutory guidance. A list of 'approved' agency staff is maintained centrally and SSET has specified procedures for checking identity, inducting new agency workers and monitoring their performance.

14. Single Central Record

In line with the requirements of the relevant legislation covering independent schools, colleges and residential homes, SSET keeps a single central record that covers the following groups:

- all staff (including supply/agency staff, vocational workers) who work at the school, college and residential houses
- all others who work in regular contact with students in the school, college and residential houses, including contractors, volunteers and vocational workers
- other on-site residents
- all members of the proprietorial body, The Sheiling Special Educational Trust

We retain and safeguard all records relating to the recruitment and appointment of staff, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, incorporating the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The details in staff files must cross match exactly with the single central record.

15. Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006

Disqualification under the Child Care Act applies to relevant staff working with Reception age children at any time; or working with children older than Reception until age eight, outside school hours. For staff who work in childcare provision or who are directly concerned with the management of such provision, the school will ensure the appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009. An enhanced DBS certificate and subscription to the DBS Update Service will confirm this for all staff.

Posts typically affected will include:

- Head of School
- Head of Residential Services
- Deputy Head of Residential Services
- Deputy Head of School
- Registered Manager (School Houses)
- Support Workers in the house the student is assigned to

Where a disclosure is made the worker will be dismissed from employment following current Disciplinary Policy and Procedures, and reported to the DSL and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer.

16. Staff Safer Recruitment training

All staff involved in the recruitment and selection process will receive training, appropriate to their role and responsibilities. The Chair/a member of every appointment panel must have successfully completed safer recruitment training.

17. Induction

Prior to starting work, all newly appointed staff, volunteers and some contractors will be expected to undertake a comprehensive induction programme which includes a module concerning Safeguarding (incorporating online safety, forms of abuse, SSET's safeguarding processes, procedures raising concerns and designating safeguarding leads) together with information regarding employee obligations.

18. Implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review

The designated senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 'Safer Recruitment & Selection Policy' is the Principal.

The designated member of staff is also responsible for ensuring that all young people, staff, parents/carers and placing local authorities are aware of our policy. A copy of this policy is posted on our website www.thesheilingringwood.co.uk. NB – this policy I am reviewing is not the one on our website.

This policy document will be reviewed at least annually and, if necessary, more frequently in response to any significant new developments in national, local and organisational policy, guidance and practice.

The proprietor, the Sheiling Special Education Trust, will also undertake an annual review of The Sheiling Ringwood's policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and ensure that all duties have been discharged in accordance with current legislation, regulations and statutory guidance.

APPENDIX 1

Interview format

Interviews will normally follow a pre-determined format with the panel agreeing a set of specific questions they will ask all candidates in order to establish their suitability for the position. A candidate's response to a question will determine whether and how that is followed up. In particular, all candidates will be asked questions to assess suitable personal behaviours for working with children and young people and particularly for working in an SEND environment.

Responses will subject to written record by the panel.

In addition to assessing and evaluating the applicant's suitability for the particular post, the interview processes and programme will also examine and check the following:

- verification of the candidate's identity, qualifications and experience
- verification of the candidate's registration with a professional body, if applicable
- gaps in the candidate's employment history and
- concerns or discrepancies arising from the information provided by the candidate and/or a referee.
- whether candidates have been subject to any form of capability processes in the preceding two years.
- the candidate's motivation and suitability of the candidate's values for working in this environment.

The panel will also ask the candidate if they wish to declare anything, in addition to the opportunity to pre-disclose at application, in light of the fact that an application for a criminal record check (DBS check), Barred List check and prohibition check (as appropriate) will be required.

After each interview, the candidates are measured against the relevant person specification. The panel will deliberate whenever there is more than one suitable candidate for a particular position.

Involving Children and Young People

We are committed to involving children and young people in the recruitment and selection process where appropriate. This may be by lesson observation in school, college or participation in group activities in the residential setting, for example by joining in a meal with staff and students.

APPENDIX 2

Pre-appointment checks

All offers of employment are made in writing, giving the title of the post, contractual hours, details of salary, salary range, (if applicable), start date and duration of the probationary period. Successful candidates are asked to reply, in writing, confirming their acceptance of the appointment as offered.

Any failure to disclose information, or the provision of incorrect information, may result in an offer of appointment being withdrawn or in disciplinary action being taken leading to summary dismissal at a later date and possible referral to the police.

When appointing new staff including vocational workers and other volunteers, SSET will:-

- verify a candidate's identity using current photographic ID and proof of address as specified in regulation except where, for exceptional reasons, none is available - in which case, the matter will be subject consideration by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- obtain a DBS check (at the appropriate level). For most appointments, an Enhanced DBS check with Barred List check (Children and Adult Workforce) will be appropriate
- check that a candidate, to be employed as a teacher, is not subject to a prohibition, directions, sanction or restrictions order (or formerly List 99 restriction) issued by the Secretary of State or by any relevant EEA professional regulating body.
- check candidates for non-teaching posts, who have a teaching qualification and/ or have worked as a teacher for any prohibitions, directions, sanctions and restrictions issued by the Secretary of State or by any relevant EEA professional regulating body.
- check that candidates who are required to be registered with a professional body in order to practice are not subject to prohibition or restrictions on practice by that body
- verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. A job applicant can be asked relevant questions about disability and health in order to establish whether they have the physical and mental capacity for the specific role.
- verify the person's right to work in the UK. If there is uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission to work in the UK, then SSET will follow advice on the GOV.UK website.
- make any further checks the SSET consider appropriate. Applicants who are non-UK nationals and eligible to work in the UK or applying for unpaid voluntary work and have not lived in the UK for a minimum of 5 years or more, will be required to obtain a foreign criminal information certificate from their county of residence. Applicants for paid or unpaid work and who have spent in excess of 3 months abroad during the last 5 years will also be required to provide a foreign criminal record check or Certificate of Good Conduct. Advice on the criminal record information/Certificates of Good Conduct may be obtained from overseas police forces, published by the Home Office, and can be found on www.GOV.UK.
- verify professional/relevant qualifications, as appropriate for the position applied for.

Applicants/volunteers (including vocational workers) do not start work unsupervised until all necessary checks have been completed. In the event that there is a justifiable delay in obtaining suitable pre-employment checks, workers may be permitted to commence work under supervision and within the terms of a documented Risk Assessment approved by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

APPENDIX 3

References

References will always be obtained, scrutinised and any concerns resolved satisfactorily before the appointment is confirmed. They will always be requested directly from the referee and SSET will not accept open references, for example in the form of 'to whom it may concern' testimonials.

We will seek at least two references on both internal and external candidates, including the current or most recent employer or, in the case of internal candidates, their current line manager. Additional referees may include previous employers (particularly from the care and/or education sector) or professionals who have known the candidate personally for at least two years. Character references from friends or relatives will not be accepted.

SSET may take up references at any stage during the application process.

A copy of the job description and person specification for the post for which the person is applying, will be included with all requests. Every request will ask:

- about the referee's relationship with the candidate;
- whether the referee is satisfied that the person has the ability and is suitable to undertake the job in question, and
- for specific comments about the applicant's suitability for the post and how they have demonstrated that they meet the person specification;
- whether the referee is completely satisfied that the candidate is suitable to work with children and, if not, for specific details of the referee's concerns.

In addition to the above, requests addressed to a candidate's current or previous employer in respect of work with children, young people and adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable to abuse will also seek:

- confirmation of details of the applicant's current post, salary and attendance record
- specific verifiable comments about the applicant's performance history and conduct
- details of any disciplinary procedures the applicant has been subject to, particularly those related to the safety and welfare of children or young people
- details of any allegations or concerns that have been raised about the applicant that relate to the safety and welfare of children or young people or behaviour towards children or young people

All referees will be reminded that:

- they have a responsibility to ensure that the reference is accurate and does not contain any material mis-statement or omission and
- relevant factual content of the reference may be discussed with the applicant.

References will be checked on receipt to ensure that all specific questions have been answered satisfactorily. The referee will be contacted by telephone to validate the reference and provide further clarification, as appropriate, for example, if the answers are vague. They will also be compared for consistency with the information provided by the candidate on their application form. Any discrepancies will be taken up with the candidate and details recorded.

APPENDIX 4

Employment of ex-offenders

The suitability for employment of a person with a criminal record will vary depending on the nature of the job and the details and circumstances of any convictions.

A candidate's criminal record will be assessed in relation to the tasks they will be required to perform and the circumstances in which the work is to be carried out. The following points will be considered when deciding on the relevance of offences to particular posts:

- Does the post involve one-to-one contact with children or other vulnerable groups?
- What level of monitoring and supervision will the individual receive?
- Does the post involve any direct responsibility for finance or items of value?
- Does the post involve direct contact with the public?
- Will the nature of the job present any opportunities for the individual to reoffend at work?

In some cases, the relationship between the offence and the post will be clear enough for the organisation to decide easily on the suitability of the applicant for the job. For shortlisted applicants who have met the requirements of the person specification and then disclose a criminal record that is not related directly to the post, the organisation will discuss the relevance of each offence with the applicant.

The following issues will need to be taken into account:

- the seriousness of the offence and its relevance to the safety of other employees, young people or property.
- the length of time since the offence occurred.
- any relevant information offered by the candidate about the circumstances which led to the offence being committed, for example, the influence of domestic or financial difficulties.
- whether the offence was a one-off or part of a history of offending.
- whether the individual's circumstances have changed since the offence was committed, making reoffending less likely.
- whether the offence has been decriminalised by Parliament.
- the country in which the offence was committed. Some activities are offences in Scotland and not in England and Wales, and vice versa.
- the degree of remorse, or otherwise, expressed by the individual and their motivation to change.

All discussions and deliberations will be recorded in accordance with recruitment procedures and will include a documented 'positive disclosures' risk assessment.