



ST. MARY'S
ACADEMY TRUST

St Mary's Academy Trust

Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure

Date agreed by the HR Committee: April 2023

Date to be reviewed: April 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Recruitment and Selection Policy applies to the appointment of **ALL** employees to the Trust and aims to ensure that based on merit, the best applicant is appointed and that all applicants have a positive experience when applying for a position.
- 1.2 Failure to select the right applicant could result in poor performance that requires managing through the Probationary Period Review Policy and/or the Improving Performance in Employment/Teachers Capability Policy.
- 1.3 This policy provides Headteachers with clear guidance to ensure that the recruitment process will promote equality of opportunity and be free from discrimination.
- 1.4 The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all employees and volunteers to share this commitment.
- 1.5 Where an alternative provision provider is used, rather than recruiting a member of staff, written confirmation from the alternative provider **MUST** be obtained detailing the safer recruitment checks that have been carried out on individuals working within any of our Schools/Head Office, including safeguarding training, that the school would otherwise perform. This information **MUST** then be input by the school office to the Single Central Record.
- 1.6 Written confirmation from the provider of any fee funded student teachers **MUST** be obtained detailing that it has carried out all safer recruitment checks, that the school would otherwise perform. This information **MUST** then be input by the school office to the Single Central Record.

2. The Vacancy and Job Description/Employee Specification

- 2.1 A vacancy can arise for several reasons i.e., through restructuring or simply when an employee leaves. If the vacancy is because of a restructuring, please refer to the Restructuring Policy.
- 2.2 When a vacancy arises, the Headteacher should examine whether the post is still needed in its current form or whether the duties and responsibilities can be carried out in another way.
- 2.3 The information to support these decisions should come from discussions with HR, Finance and where possible the previous employee through the exit conversation process and a critical review of the post in respect of budget constraints and service requirements as detailed in the School Plan.
- 2.4 Standard job descriptions and employee specifications are available on the intranet for all posts within Schools and the Business Centre. If a new post is created the role must be discussed with HR who will advise in respect of the job description, employee specification and job evaluation scheme to determine the grade of the post.
- 2.5 Headteachers/Managers must also consider the content of the job description and specification when setting performance management targets to ensure the skills/abilities are accurately reflected in the targets set.

- 2.6 The Job Description describes the duties and responsibilities of the post, and the Employee Specification describes the personal attributes required to perform the job. The Job Description and Employee Specification form the basis of the selection criteria which will be used for both the shortlisting and interviewing process.
- 2.7 The Employee Specification contains the requirements of the post, i.e., experience, training, qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities. The information contained within this document allows potential applicants to self-select at an early stage in the recruitment process so it is important that the criteria are relevant to the post, readily understood and can be demonstrated by the applicant at either the application or interview stage (or both).
- 2.8 Standard roles are employed within schools with standard job descriptions and employee specifications that have been agreed with the Trade Unions and, in a number of instances are for staff who have TUPE transferred from the Local Authority. Any changes to a role MUST be discussed with HR in the first instance.
- 2.9 The Trust do not use the Local Authority job evaluation scheme. The Trust has its own comparison evaluation scheme managed by the CEO and HR.

3. Recruitment – Authorisation and Procedure

3.1 Establishing a Vacancy

- 3.1.1 A vacancy will have arisen due to the school creating an additional post or an existing post holder having left their employment. The establishment of a new post on the school structure will be subject to approval by the Trust Board via the Chief Executive. Recruitment to an existing vacant post will be subject to approval by the Chief Executive and Head of Finance.

3.2 Internal Advert

- 3.2.1 Consideration must be given to advertising the post internally within the Trust in the first instance with a one-week closing date. If applicants do not meet the required benchmark, then an external advert should be placed. If the post is to be advertised externally, reasons for this must be stated on the job advert request form.

3.3 Job Advert request process

- 3.3.1 All advertisement requests must be sent to the School Link Officer HR on a job advert request form. This will be processed by the School Link Officer HR who will obtain approval in the first instance from Chief Executive and Head of Finance. Once approved, the advert will be produced and sent to the Headteacher/Manager for final approval and it will then be placed in the appropriate media as stated on the job advert request form.

4. Completing the Job Advert Request Form

4.1 The following information **MUST** be provided on the form:

- Publication that the advert is to be placed in
- Post Title
- Grade of the post
- Hours of work per week
- If the post is term time or 52 weeks per year
- If the post holder be required to frequently drive on Trust related business
- Type of contract e.g., is the post permanent or fixed term
- If the post is fixed term, a reason and an end date **must** be given
- If the post is covered by the Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006
- Deadline for applications to be submitted.

4.2 If the job advert request does not contain all of the information stipulated above, it will be returned to the sender for completion before it can be processed.

6. Selection Process

6.1 Choosing the Interview Selection Panel

- 6.1.1 The panel **must** remain the same from the start of the process to the end and all members of the panel must be involved in all stages of the process.
- 6.1.2 At least one member of the panel must have attended Safer Recruitment Training within the last 3 years.
- 6.1.3 The Chair of the Panel must be agreed at the start of the process. They will be responsible for coordinating the process and ensuring that collective decisions are made.
- 6.1.4 The School Link Officer HR must be informed who the Chair of the Panel is with their contact details. On the closing date the selection pack and application forms will be sent to the Chair by the School Link Officer HR.

6.2 Makeup of the Selection Panel

- 6.2.1 It is recommended that there are 3 people on the panel and same sex panels must be avoided where possible. Panel members must be able to commit the time required to the selection process and once the panel members have been established, they should remain the same throughout the selection process.

6.3 Shortlisting Process

- 6.3.1 The shortlisting decisions must be recorded on the shortlisting form. Details of all shortlisted candidates must be sent immediately to the School Link Officer HR who will request references and send invite to interview letters.

6.4 Declaration of Personal Interests

- 6.4.1 If it becomes apparent that a panel member has a personal relationship with an applicant which may impact on their ability to be unbiased, they must withdraw from the panel, see Code of Conduct Policy. Each panel member MUST individually assess each application form.

6.5 Essential Criteria

- 6.5.1 The completed application form must be assessed against the essential criteria for the post as detailed on the Employee Specification.
- 6.5.2 Following the individual shortlisting process the panel should meet and discuss their individual assessments and reach a consensus decision on which applicants are to be shortlisted/invited for interview.
- 6.5.3 The Chair should record the panel's collective decision utilising a Shortlisting Grid which will provide the reasons for not shortlisting an applicant.

6.6 Scrutinising the Application Form

- 6.6.1 The application forms MUST be scrutinised to identify any inconsistencies; discrepancies; gaps in an applicant's employment history; repeated changes of employment or in the case of teachers a move from a permanent post to a supply or temporary post. The panel member who has attended Safer Recruitment training should lead with this task. (Please contact HR for guidance).
- 6.6.2 If the applicant has met the essential criteria but the panel have concerns, the applicant should be shortlisted but questioned further at interview to explore reasons. An additional set of questions can be asked in respect of the concerns at the end of the interview. The panel member who has attended Safer Recruitment training should lead with this task. (Please contact HR for guidance).

6.7 Minor Criteria

- 6.7.1 If there are a large number of applicants who meet all the essential criteria, then the minor criteria can be used to reduce the number of shortlisted applicants.

6.8 Disabled Applicants

- 6.8.1 All applicants with a disability who meet all of the essential criteria must be offered an interview to ensure they have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Appropriate arrangements may need to be made for disabled applicants to attend the interview in terms of access and support.

6.9 Selection Methods

6.9.1 In addition to a face-to-face interview, Headteachers can consider a range of appropriate selection methods, some of which could include:

- Presentation
- Observation
- In-Tray Exercise
- Teaching Exercise

6.9.2 If testing is used, this should be scored in accordance with the Assessment Scoring System. If tests are included these should be relevant to the essential criteria and be appropriate for the level of the post.

6.9.3 To ensure fair and successful selection, Headteachers should use insights from several selection methods in the decision-making process. A structured and rigorous approach is essential to help us prevent unconscious bias in selection procedures.

7. Preparation for Interviews

7.1 Before the Interview, a criminal convictions disclosure form MUST be sent to all candidates invited for an interview and this MUST be completed before the interview takes place. The form will be sent by the School Link Officer HR with the invite to interview letter. If any criminal convictions are detailed on the form the Chair of the panel MUST contact HR for advice prior to the interview taking place.

7.2 Shortlisted applicants who have listed criminal convictions or cautions on their application form, should have 2 interviews. Interview 1 should be as per usual procedures, and interview 2 should be to discuss anything disclosed on the form. (Please contact HR who will provide support and advice regarding the questions to be asked).

7.3 If an applicant does not complete the form prior to interview the interview should not take place until HR have been consulted.

8. Inviting Shortlisted Applicants for Interview

8.1 Interviews for all posts must include a face-to-face interview. When inviting applicants to interview they will be informed in the invite to interview letter that they need to bring to the interview originals of the following:

- Qualification certificates i.e., those specified on the Employee Specification.
- Proof of their right to work in the UK (See guidance on Preventing Illegal Working for full details).
- Driving licence and insurance documents where required as part of the job.
- For DBS Checks either: a passport, driving licence or birth certificate. If neither of these is available, other forms of ID can be accepted.

8.2 If any tests have been arranged (see point 6.10), details of this must also be included in the correspondence so that the applicant can be prepared. If this is the case, please inform the School Link Officer HR when providing details of those shortlisted.

9. Requesting References

- 9.1 To comply with safer recruitment the School Link Officer HR must, prior to the interview, send for references for all shortlisted applicants by sending the reference request letter and form, the job description and employee specification.
- 9.2 If the applicant has not given their permission to contact their current employer, OR if references have been requested but not yet returned, they can still be interviewed, however, the Chair of the Panel must make them aware at the end of the interview that if they are the preferred candidate, references will be required before the appointment can be confirmed.
- 9.3 If an applicant has not provided their current employer as a referee, the reason for this MUST be discussed at the interview. If the applicant is from college, they should provide details of their lecturer or an alternative professional referee. References from family or friends cannot be accepted in any circumstances.
- 9.4 Personal e-mail addresses i.e., Hotmail; Gmail, even if from a former manager/employer are not acceptable. Applicants must provide a business e-mail address for their referees.
- 9.5 For posts working with children or young people, where applicable, a reference relating to a role in which the applicant worked with children should be obtained, even if this is not their last employment.
- 9.6 If a referee does not respond to the request for a reference, the applicant must be contacted to ask them to follow it up or to provide another referee. Failure to provide suitable references will mean the subject to offer will be withdrawn.

10. Checking References Prior to Interview

- 10.1 The panel must open the references **before** interviewing so that any concerns or issues are identified and can be explored further with the referee and taken up with the applicant at interview. The panel member who has attended safer recruitment training should take the lead and plan appropriate questions to be asked at the end of the interview.
- 10.2 References should be used appropriately to determine the applicant's suitability. Panel members must not use references for shortlisting purposes.
- 10.3 If the references reveal any inconsistencies or doubts about the person's suitability, the issues should be clarified with the referee and recorded in writing.
- 10.4 Any details about disciplinary action or allegations made should be considered in the circumstances of the individual case. If a sanction is no longer live then it should not be considered unless it is related to the Safety and Welfare of Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults.
- 10.5 If a reference states a person was dismissed due to a criminal offence and this led to a conviction, this is relevant and can be considered when deciding whether to proceed with the offer (Please contact HR for guidance)
- 10.6 If the referee says the person was convicted and therefore dismissed, please contact HR who will check against the filtering list.

- 10.7 If the referee does not say what offence it is, this is considered as inaccurate data and must be destroyed. If we receive such a reference, we must ask for further information to be provided, i.e., details of what the conviction was for as an inaccurate document cannot be retained on the personal file (Please contact HR for guidance).

11. Questioning Against the Criteria

- 11.1 Questions must always relate to the criteria in the Employee Specification. However, it is important to probe areas of the application form if more information can be obtained about the applicant's experience, skills and abilities. The panel may decide to set a benchmark score prior to the interviews. This may be particularly useful where there are a limited number of applicants. The panel member who has attended safer recruitment training can take the lead and use the information provided in the delegate manual.

11.2 Questioning Techniques

11.2.1 Closed questions can be used when checking out facts and will usually elicit "Yes" or "No" answers.

11.2.2 Open questions can get the interviewee to talk and can often cover the topic in depth. They often begin with "What, Why, When, How, Tell me about, Please describe".

11.2.3 To comply with safer recruitment hypothetical questions should not be used.

11.2.4 Please refer to the Safer Recruitment delegate handbook

11.3 Inappropriate Questioning

11.3.1 These are any questions relating to:

- Marital status (including children)
- Gender Identity
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexual orientation (including gender re-assignment)
- Religion and Belief
- Age

11.3.2 Data collected from the above is considered as sensitive. Sensitive data about an individual is only collected when an individual has given free, explicit, and unambiguous consent.

12. Interview Assessment Sheet

- 12.1 When the questions have been agreed the Interview Assessment Sheet should be completed identifying the Essential and Minor criteria from the Employee Specification to be tested at interview, alongside the relevant factor i.e., Relevant Experience, Education and Training, General and Special Knowledge, Skills and Abilities and Additional Factors.

12.2 The first two boxes should detail the question to be asked to explore the applicant's ability to meet the criteria and the evidence required (model answer). The third box is for notes to be taken during interview.

12.3 **Supplementary Questions – Concerns / Discrepancies / Gaps in Employment**

12.3.1 There may be several supplementary questions that need to be asked dependent upon the individual's personal information supplied in the application form/reference. These can include:

- Gaps and discrepancies in the applicant's employment history.
- The reasons for a history of repeated changes in employment without any clear career progression, or in the case of teachers, a mid-career move to supply teaching or temporary work, or midterm move.
- The applicants' attitude toward children, young people, or vulnerable adults.
- Their ability to support the Trust's agenda for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Concerns or discrepancies arising from the information provided by the applicant and/or a referee.
- Ask the applicant if they wish to declare anything in light of the requirements for a DBS Check.

The panel must be prepared to probe when they feel that the applicant has not given a complete answer.

13. **The Interview**

13.1 The school office must be aware of arrangements so that they can meet and greet the applicants on arrival and take copies of the requested documentation from each applicant. Advice can be sought by the school office from the School Link Officer HR.

13.2 To ensure a professional interview, the interview should be planned, and it should be agreed which panel member will ask which questions. All panel members should score applicants in accordance with the following scoring system:

- Does not meet the criterion – showed no evidence of the skills/experience/ability.
- Barely adequate – evidence only had some relevance.
- Adequate – evidence was relevant and showed some knowledge and understanding.
- Good – evidence answered the question and showed knowledge and understanding.
- Excellent – evidence demonstrated an in-depth knowledge and understanding.

13.3 **Undertaking the Interview**

13.3.1 Each panel member should record the interview, assess the responses the applicant has provided and score each question on the Interview Assessment Sheet and then complete the Overall Individual Score box. To avoid influencing other panel members, do not at this stage discuss an applicant until all panel members have completed making their notes and scores.

13.4 Selecting the Right Applicant

- 13.4.1 At the end of the interview process the Chair should encourage discussion about each applicant's overall performance, including any tests and presentations in order to arrive at an agreed score against each question. This will enable the panel to compare all the scores and reach a decision. This must be recorded on each panel member's Interview Assessment Sheet. The Overall Panel Score box is then completed. The panel should appoint the applicant with the highest score against the Essential Criteria. The box, to indicate whether the applicant has been selected or not, must be completed. Where an applicant is not selected for appointment, the reasons should be given in the box provided.
- 13.4.2 If a benchmark score was set and the highest score has not met the benchmark, then the panel will need to consider re-advertising the post.
- 13.4.3 If two applicants' essential criteria scores are equal or very close and one of the two applicants is disabled, the post must be offered to the disabled applicant. If there are no disabled applicants and the scores are equal, the panel should add on the scores from the Minor Criteria and appoint the applicant with the highest score. If the panel is unable to make a decision, the two applicants must be invited back for further questioning on the existing criteria.
- 13.4.4 If the successful applicant is disabled, reasonable adjustments must be implemented before the post is offered. Contact HR for further guidance.

14. Verification of Documents

14.1 Qualifications

- 14.1.1 The Chair of the panel must check the authenticity of qualification documents; copies are not acceptable. If the applicant cannot produce an original certificate or a certified copy, or a letter of confirmation from the awarding body, they will need to contact the awarding body themselves to obtain written verification. Where a qualification cannot be verified / produced then no offer of employment can be made.

14.2 Verification of Right to Work

- 14.2.1 At the interview, the Chair of the panel must check all applicants' proof of their right to work in the United Kingdom. For any queries in relation to "preventing illegal working" contact HR.
- 14.2.2 If the applicant is from overseas, please contact HR for guidance.

14.3 Verification of Shortlisted Applicants Identity

- 14.3.1 At the interview, the Chair of the panel **must** check and verify the shortlisted applicants identify and pass this information to the School Link Officer HR to complete the on-line DBS form system.

15. Preferred Candidates

- 15.1 The preferred candidate can only be made a “subject to” offer of employment to comply with safer recruitment and **must** be informed of any outstanding checks that are needed e.g., medical clearance, DBS clearance (where necessary) and satisfactory references.

16. Unsuccessful Applicants

- 16.1 Unsuccessful applicants should be informed of the outcome and given details of who they should contact for feedback. The Chair of the panel should provide positive and constructive feedback, identifying key areas where the applicant performed well and how the weak areas could be improved for future interviews.

17. Pre-Employment Checks

- 17.1 Irrespective of whether the candidate is internal or external, the same pre-employment checks will be taken using the recruitment checklist.

- 17.2 The following checks must be carried out prior to the preferred candidate commencing in the role:

- References
- Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 and the 2018 Regulations
- Right to work in the UK
- ID Evidence
- Copies of qualifications
- Medical clearance
- Prohibition Check (teachers and teaching assistants)
- DBS (including Barred list check)
- Section 128 check for management roles
- Overseas check (where applicable)
- Evidence of Eligibility to Work in the UK - Settlement Scheme Status
- Online searches

- 17.3 As part of pre-employment checks, we will carry out online searches on successful candidates, including searches on LinkedIn, and their name, or variations of their name, followed by, convicted, crown court, magistrates court, and the name of the country they have lived in, that is if they have lived overseas. They will be informed of this in the subject to offer letter.

- 17.4 In all cases where an applicant has worked or been resident overseas in the previous ten years a check of the applicant’s criminal record from the relevant authority in that country will be required. Please note however overseas checks must be carried out **by the applicant** and they will be required to provide the information to the panel on request. The Chair of the panel should direct the preferred candidate to the Home office website which provides details of overseas checks.

- 17.5 For posts working with children up to and including reception class age and, under 8 outside of normal working hours, the preferred candidate will be required to complete a self-disclosure form to check that they do not meet any of the disqualification criteria. Where the preferred candidate meets any criteria, they can apply for a waiver to Ofsted however they must not be employed until Ofsted have issued a waiver. If no waiver is issued the offer must be retracted.

- 17.6 We have the legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:
- The harm test is satisfied in respect of that individual.
 - The individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence, or if there is reason to believe that the individual has committed a listed relevant offence.
 - The individual has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left.
- 17.7 EU Settlement Scheme (Settled and Pre-Settled Status) – If the preferred candidate is an EU, EEA, or Swiss Citizen, they must have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021. They can also apply if they are the family member of an eligible person of Northern Ireland.
- 17.8 If their application is successful, they will receive either settled or pre-settled status. Which status they receive is dependent on how long they have lived in the UK when they apply. Their rights will be different depending on which status they receive and when they started living in the UK. For more information, please go to: -

<https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

18. Paperwork

- 18.1 New Starters - When all the above pre-employment checks have been completed and are satisfactory, the Chair of the panel will contact the individual to arrange a start date. The Headteacher/Manager should complete either the new starter or variation form via Microsoft Forms. When this is submitted, it will automatically go to the SMAT SLO inbox and be processed by the School Link Officer HR.
- 18.2 A signed recruitment checklist MUST be emailed to the School Link Officer HR. Incomplete/inaccurate forms/documents will be returned which may cause delays with pay and the issuing of a contract therefore it is essential that the documents are checked before they are sent.
- 18.3 Unsuccessful Applicants – All paperwork MUST be sent to the School Link Officer HR who will retain and destroy in accordance with the Trust's retention schedule.

19. Recruitment Complaints Procedure

- 19.1 Should a complaint be raised by an applicant during the recruitment process, the Complaints Procedure should be followed. The process should stop until the complaint has been fully investigated.

20. Data Impact Assessment

- 20.1 At all stages of this procedure data obtained will be used only for the purpose for which it is intended which is to calculate protection of earnings payments and will be stored securely with restricted access limited to the Chief Executive, HR, and Payroll. Following the process data will be stored on the electronic personal file for the new starter, for the duration of the employee's employment with the Trust and for 6 years thereafter. The data will be destroyed at this time using a confidential shredding service.

21. Equality and Diversity

- 21.1 The Trust adheres to the Equality Act 2010. The policy has been equality impact assessed by the HR Committee, if on reading this policy you feel there are any equality and diversity issues, please contact St Mary's Academy Trust who will, if necessary, ensure the policy is reviewed.

22. Equalities Monitoring

- 22.1 The Trust has a duty under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 to monitor applications for employment.
- 22.2 Equalities monitoring helps to show whether the Trust's workforce reflects the borough's diverse community and if practices and procedures are fair to all groups.
- 22.3 Monitoring is also necessary in respect of gender, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, and age at both the shortlisting and appointment stages.

23. Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions

- 23.1 Payment of salary and wages are assessable to tax under Schedule E (75) [ICTA 1988, S150, FA 2002, S35].
- 23.2 A contract of employment will usually give rise to payment of salary or wage. As such any payment of salary or wage made by the Trust under a contract of employment will be subject to income tax and national insurance in the normal manner.