SKYLARK FEDERATION

Safer Recruitment Policy

Schools covered: Appleshaw St Peter's CE Primary and Kimpton, Thruxton & Fyfield CE Primary.

- **Date of Policy:** July 2026
- **Date for Review:** July 2027
- **Statutory Framework:** This policy is compliant with statutory DfE guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE 2026)*, the *Crime and Policing Act 2026*, the *School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009*, the *Data (Use and Access) Act 2025*, the *Data Protection Act 2018*, and the *UK GDPR*.

1. Purpose and Aims

The Governing Body of The Skylark Federation recognizes that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is an integral factor in recruitment and selection. It is an essential part of creating a safe, welcoming environment for our primary pupils.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Attract and appoint the highest caliber of staff and volunteers.
- Ensure all recruitment and selection activities are fair, transparent, and equitable.
- Deter, identify, and reject prospective applicants who are unsuitable to work with children.

2. Panel Composition and Training

To ensure safety is embedded at every stage of the selection process:

- At least one member of every interview panel must have successfully completed formal, accredited **Safer Recruitment Training**.
- Wherever possible, the Senior Attendance Champion, Executive Headteacher, or a designated Safeguarding Governor will sit on the panel.

3. Advertising and Job Descriptions

All advertisements, job descriptions, and person specifications issued by the federation will explicitly state the school's commitment to safeguarding.

- Job descriptions will clearly define the safeguarding responsibilities attached to the post.
- Prospective applicants will be given access to this policy, the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and an official application form. **Curriculum Vitae (CVs) will not be accepted** in isolation, as standard application forms ensure a consistent history is captured.

4. Scrutiny of Application Forms & Shortlisting

Upon the closing of applications, all forms will be rigorously scrutinized by the shortlisting panel to:

- Identify any inconsistencies, discrepancies, or anomalies in the provided information.
- Check for gaps in employment history. Any gaps must be noted and thoroughly investigated during the interview stage if the candidate is shortlisted.
- **Self-Declaration:** Shortlisted candidates will be required to complete a confidential self-declaration form regarding their criminal record and any metadata relating to their suitability to work with children.

5. Mandatory Online Searches on Shortlisted Candidates

In accordance with statutory KCSIE requirements, the federation will conduct an **online search** (including publicly available social media profiles and general Google searches) for all shortlisted candidates prior to their interview.

- **Purpose:** The search aims to identify any incidents, convictions, or issues that are publicly available online, which might raise doubts regarding the candidate's suitability to work with children or protect the reputation of the federation.
- **Process:** To ensure fairness and avoid bias, these searches will ideally be conducted by an administrative staff member who is not on the interview panel. Only relevant, flagged safeguarding or suitability concerns will be passed to the panel to be explored with the candidate during the interview.

6. References

1. References will be requested for all shortlisted candidates, including internal applicants, **prior to the interview** so that any queries raised can be explored face-to-face.
2. The school will directly contact the referee; "open" references (e.g., "to whom it may concern" letters) will not be accepted.
3. One reference must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer. If the applicant is not currently working with children but has done so in the past, a reference will also be sought from that specific employer.
4. Referees will be asked specific questions regarding the candidate's disciplinary history, any substantiated safeguarding allegations, and their overall suitability to work with children.

7. Conditional Offers & Mandatory Pre-Employment Checks

CRITICAL SAFEGUARD: All offers of employment within The Skylark Federation are strictly conditional upon the satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks. **All checks must be completed, verified, and recorded on the Single Central Record (SCR) BEFORE an individual begins work at the school.** The practice of allowing an 8-week buffer period after employment begins to clear vetting checks is strictly prohibited.

The following checks must be completed prior to day one:

- **Identity Check:** Verification of name, date of birth, and address via original photographic and structural documentation.
- **Enhanced DBS Certificate:** A satisfactory Enhanced Criminal Records check via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- **Children's Barred List Check:** Confirming the individual is not barred from working with children. Applies to all staff and volunteers entering Regulated Activity following the removal of the supervision exemption.
- **Prohibition from Teaching Check:** Verified via the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) portal for all teaching staff and leaders.
- **Section 128 Direction Check:** To ensure individuals appointed to management, governing positions, or senior leadership are not prohibited from managing a school.

- **Right to Work in the UK:** Verified in accordance with Home Office regulations.
- **Professional Qualifications:** Verification of original certificates showing mandatory qualifications (e.g., QTS status).
- **Medical Fitness:** A confidential health declaration to ensure the candidate is physically and mentally fit to fulfill the requirements of the role.
- **Overseas Checks:** For individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK for a continuous period of 6 months or more in the past 5 years, an overseas criminal record check or certificate of good conduct will be required.

Emergency Exception: In exceptional circumstances, a staff member may commence work before a full DBS certificate is physically received *only* if: the Children's Barred List check has cleared, all other checks (including identity and references) are complete, a comprehensive written Safer Recruitment Risk Assessment is signed off by the Executive Headteacher, and the individual is kept under continuous, uninterrupted supervision.

8. Volunteers and Contractors

- **Volunteers in Regulated Activity:** Under KCSiE 2026, the statutory supervision exemption is removed. Any volunteer who teaches, trains, instructs, cares for, or supervises children on a regular basis (3 or more days in a 30-day period across settings) or undertakes *any* overnight stay is engaged in **Regulated Activity**. These volunteers *must* undergo an Enhanced DBS check with a **Children's Barred List check** prior to commencing duties, regardless of whether staff supervision is present.
- **Volunteers NOT in Regulated Activity:** Only volunteers undertaking non-supervisory tasks or isolated, non-regular activities (e.g., a parent helping on a single day trip without an overnight stay or 1:1 supervision) fall outside Regulated Activity. Such individuals will undergo a robust written risk assessment and an Enhanced DBS check without a Barred List check.
- **Contractors:** The federation will obtain written confirmation from any contracting agency or local authority service that all identical safer recruitment checks have been successfully completed prior to deploying their staff on school sites.

9. Retention of Recruitment Records

- **Unsuccessful Candidates:** All paperwork, interview notes, and application forms gathered as part of a recruitment exercise will be retained securely and confidentially for **12 months** from the date of the interview. This is held in strict compliance with the **Data Protection Act 2018** and the **UK GDPR** to defend against any potential legal or tribunal claims. After 12 months, the files will be securely shredded.
- **Successful Candidates:** All documents gathered during recruitment (references, identity checks, self-declarations) will form part of the employee's permanent personnel file and will be recorded accurately on the school's **Single Central Record (SCR)**.