



## Safer and Inclusive Recruitment Policy

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# HISP Multi Academy Trust

## Safer and Inclusive Recruitment Policy

We write our policies through a particular lens – that these documents are vital underpinning for our Trust to be one Trust and how the policy impacts you, the reader in scope of the policy. References to “we” refer to the responsibilities we recognise HISP has as an employer across our schools. Together, we are One Trust.

This policy supports our values by putting **Pupils First** through rigorous safeguarding, promoting **Equity** and inclusion in all recruitment decisions, and upholding **Excellence** in our hiring practices. With **Courage** and through and fair recruitment, we build **Sustainability** in a workforce that has the **Ambition** to serve our diverse communities.

### 2. Introduction

Safer and inclusive recruitment is central to the safeguarding of children, young people and our staff. We recognise that it is our collective duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people (referred to as our pupils) who attend our schools and are in our care. This includes ensuring that we recruit the best possible candidates on merit, ability, and suitability. We also commit to adopt safer recruitment and selection practices which prevent unsuitable persons from gaining access to our pupils.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our equal opportunities policy and How To Guidance on Recruitment for Managers.

Our policy is based on legislation, guidance and best practice and aims to promote consistent practice across the Trust based on recommendations and guidance including:

- Statutory guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE);
- Keeping children safe in education (September 2024) (KCSIE);
- Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (DUCA);
- Department for Education (DfE) ‘Staffing and employment advice for schools’ 2017;
- London Child Protection Procedures on safer recruitment;
- Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015 (the Prevent Duty Guidance) and;

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- Any guidance or code of practice published by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- The Trust's Safeguarding Policy.

It is the responsibility of each Trust partner agency or organisation to consider how these principles can be embedded in and applied to their organisation.

We are legally required to carry out the pre-appointment checks detailed in this Policy, and any accompanying Recruitment How to Guidance. As an employee and applicant, you will be required to provide us with certain information to enable us to carry out and maintain the appropriate checks. We are also required to provide certain information to third parties, such as the DBS and the Teaching Regulation Agency (previously known as the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL)). If we do not provide the information requested, we may not be able to meet our employment, safeguarding, or legal obligations. All personal information will be processed in accordance with the Staff Privacy Notice.

### 2. Aims

The key aims of this policy are that:

- Our recruitment practices enable us to employ the best possible staff based on their merits, abilities and suitability for the position.
- We establish clear and consistent practices to minimise the risk of those who may be a risk to our pupils and to ensure fairness and inclusivity in our recruitment.
- All job applicants are considered equally, and no job applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex, or sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, disability, or age.
- We are compliant with all relevant legislation.
- We meet our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all those in our Trust who have contact with our pupils:

- All teaching staff
- All support staff

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- External contractors, temporary workers, workers from overseas
- Volunteers
- Partner agencies.

### 4. Partner Agencies

We will include the principles of safer recruitment in the terms of any contract or service level agreements drawn up with contractors or agencies that provide services for, or staff to work with, our pupils. Any service level agreement or contract will contain a statement which makes explicit the commitment of both parties to the principles of safeguarding, equal opportunities and safer recruitment. Supplier agreements are renewed annually.

### 5. Starting the recruitment process

Hiring managers should initially draft a job description or review an existing one to decide if there is a need to amend/update the responsibilities. Proactive consideration should also be given to whether the post must be filled on a full-time basis, or whether a more flexible working pattern can be offered (such as job share, part-time or term-time only, or compressed hours).

The job description must include:

- The main duties of the post.
- The extent of the role's responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of pupils they are responsible for or with whom they come into contact.
- If the role is subject to an enhanced DBS check.
- The grade and salary range. An entirely new role is likely to need evaluation (via the One Trust Services People team) prior to approval and advertising to ensure an appropriate grade/salary is assigned.

A Person Specification must also be prepared focussing on:

- The essential qualifications and experience genuinely necessary for effective job performance.
- Other requirements needed to perform the role in relation to safeguarding.
- The specific, non-ambiguous competencies that the candidate needs to demonstrate to be successful (for example, we should not refer to 'good' communication skills).
- Desirable criteria can deter candidates from underrepresented groups and therefore be non-inclusive. This is especially if the criteria include personal

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qualities which are not objectively justified, measurable and described in behavioural terms. If desirable criteria must be used, it is recommended that there are just 1 or 2 for the role and only considered at shortlisting/selection where candidates are otherwise equally ranked.

In consultation with the local HR contact and, as appropriate, the One Trust Services People team, the hiring manager should also confirm the selection process so that this information can be provided in the advertising details. One or more structured panel interviews should question experience and skills relevant to role and cover a review of employment history and safeguarding awareness. Consideration should be given to whether situational and behavioural questions need to be combined with real-time problem-solving tasks during the interview where the role requires an ability to think on one's feet.

In addition, the process needs to focus on activities that will provide sound evidence to support selection. For example:

- A (timed) presentation on a topic to be provided prior to interview, with questions on the presentation
- Observation of teaching or other related activity for non-teaching roles
- A facilitated panel interview with the panel made up of pupils
- In tray exercises appropriate to the role, including an activity with pupils if relevant.

Before a proposed role is advertised, hiring managers must gain approval from the relevant signatories (normally the Headteacher/Unit Leader with a review by Finance for budget confirmation and the People team for employment compliance). This happens by submitting a vacancy request to the local HR contact. The Recruitment How to Guidance for Managers should be referred to for more details, and, as necessary, the HISP Operating Manual.

### **6. Advertising an approved role**

Our aim is to advertise all vacant posts to encourage as wide a field of candidates as possible, utilising a range of platforms and normally entailing both external advertisement and internal to the Trust vacancy channels. As set out in the previous section, proactive consideration needs to be given to how a vacancy can be offered on a flexible working basis (not just part-time) and the Trust's commitment to flexible working should be conveyed in any Information Pack and recruitment advertising material.

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Exceptionally, where there are sufficiently qualified and experienced internal candidates, or where staff are at risk of redundancy, an internal advertisement may be appropriate in the first instance prior to advertising externally thereafter. One Trust People Services' advice should be sought in these cases.

Hiring managers should consider putting the advertisement and job description through a decoder to analyse the language used and whether there is bias towards or against certain groups. The finalised material for advertising should include:

- Information about our Trust's vision and values, the school and its aligned values, the department and team, together with a link to this Policy;
- Job description and person specification;
- Application form, explanatory notes about completing the form;
- Explicit reference that CVs and incomplete applications will not be accepted;
- Reference to the Equalities Monitoring Form (which is completed when making an application);
- Request for any adjustments required to support the candidate through the process;
- Proposed selection process and its timeline, including a general overview of the types of questions or themes to expect at any interview. (This approach helps reduce anxiety and allows for preparation without eliminating the opportunity to assess spontaneous problem-solving skills and adaptability.);
- Pre-interview Reference Pro forma for completion by the candidate prior to an interview;
- List of identity, qualification and professional body registration documents which will need to be brought to the interview by the candidate;
- The Trust's (and any Partner Agency's) commitments to safeguarding and inclusive recruitment (Appendix 1).

The One Trust Services People team can support the preparation of an Information Pack to Candidates.

In the case of internal applications, where a full application form is already held on file, a written statement or expression of interest is sufficient, demonstrating how the candidate meets the requirements of the job and updating the application form information held on file.

### **7. Applying for a role**

Applicants should be aware that we do require a completed application form as part of the Safer Recruitment process. CVs cannot be accepted.

If shortlisted for interview, we do ask applicants to notify us of any reasonable adjustments necessary to provide support during the selection process.

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We are required to ask applicants to disclose any relevant conviction, adult cautions and other matters which may affect their suitability to work with children and young people as set out in Sections 13 and 14.

Applicants should be aware that providing false information at any stage of the recruitment process may be an offence and could result in the application being rejected, offer of employment being withdrawn, summary dismissal and, where appropriate, a referral to the police and other professional bodies.

### **8. Before the interviews take place – shortlisting and references**

#### **8.1 Shortlisting**

Hiring managers should ensure that any information which might indicate that a candidate has a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 is removed before shortlisting. As appropriate, One Trust Services People team advice should be sought. Any salary information should be redacted so that shortlisting is based purely on the knowledge, skills and experience presented in the application.

Due to the regulated nature of teaching and associated statutory requirements, applications for teaching are not normally anonymised for shortlisting. Non-teaching support roles should be anonymised and the personal details of all applicants withheld at the shortlisting stage. Further details are covered in the Recruitment How To guidance.

The shortlisting should be conducted by a panel of at least two people, comprised of Headteacher/Unit Leader (as appropriate), Hiring Manager, Head of Department, local HR or One Trust Services People team member. The panel members (who must be Safer Recruitment trained<sup>1</sup> in the last two years) should each be clear about what their role involves and should assess each application form equally according to how the experience/skills it sets out meet the criteria set out in the job description and person specification. The panel should record the reasons and decision to include or exclude a candidate in writing.

Any anomalies, discrepancies or employment gaps in the application forms must be noted, to be explored with candidates at interview. This can include, for example, a history of repeated changes of employment without any apparent career progression or a mid-career move from a permanent to temporary post.

The disclosure of convictions, cautions or pending cases will not necessarily prevent employment but must be risk assessed in the same way as a positive DBS disclosure. This is covered further in sections 13 and 14.

#### **8.2 References**

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<sup>1</sup> We recommend the NSPCC Safer Recruitment training module

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Our full referencing process requires us to cover at least a five year period. We aim to take up at least 2 pre-interview references for all shortlisted candidates including internal candidates in accordance with KCSIE, using the Trust's template reference format.

The purpose of seeking pre-interview references is to obtain objective information to support appointment decisions. It also enables the interviewers to address any issues of concern with you at interview. This is especially pertinent where the role has safeguarding responsibilities. One written reference should be from the headteacher of your current or most recent employer / or HR (not from a colleague within the organisation). The second written reference should be from a previous employer/ line manager or HR (not from a colleague within the organisation). In the case of an internal candidate, this should normally be the Headteacher unless they are part of the interview panel in which case a suitable alternative should be nominated.

Where it is not possible to obtain a written employment reference from an employer (for example where there is a gap between employments) a character reference must be obtained. A suitable character witness may be obtained from, for example:

- An academic professional who has had supervisory contact with the applicant in a professional capacity in the past two years.
- A professional who has worked with the applicant in a setting which includes children and young people.

We will compare all references with any information given on your application form. Any discrepancies or inconsistencies in the information will be taken up with you and the relevant referee before any appointment is confirmed. Where a reference is not received prior to interview it will be reviewed upon receipt. Any discrepancies identified between the reference and the application form and/or the interview assessment form will be considered by the Headteacher (or their nominated deputy) before an appointment is finally confirmed.

You, or a referee, may be asked to provide further information or clarification and only when all checks are complete and confirmed as satisfactory can an appointment be confirmed. Such information may include information related to sickness absence. If factual references are received i.e., those which contain limited information such as job title and dates of employment, this will not necessarily disadvantage an applicant although additional references may be sought before an appointment can be confirmed. For colleagues working in regulated activity, in these circumstances such additional references must be sought before any confirmation of appointment.

We reserve the right to make telephone contact with any referee to verify the details of the written reference provided. Written notes should be made following such telephone calls.

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**We will consider any information about past disciplinary action or allegations** on an individual basis by using a risk assessment which will be considered by the interview panel. Advice must be sought, as appropriate, from the One Trust Services People team contact and the HISP Director of Safeguarding. Cases in which an issue was satisfactorily resolved some time ago or an allegation determined to be unfounded or that did not require formal disciplinary sanctions, and in which no further issues have been raised, are less likely to cause concern than more serious or recent concerns, or issues that were not resolved satisfactorily. A history of repeated concerns or allegations over time should give cause for concern and must be addressed with you. If you are successful at this interview, you will not be able to start work until this has been addressed.

### **9. Inviting shortlisted candidates to interview**

If you are shortlisted for the interview/selection process, you will receive a formal invitation to confirm this. In that invitation, we will ask candidates if there are any reasonable adjustments needed to facilitate the process and we will explain any interview procedure and selection activities, including the broad areas of questioning that the interview is likely to cover.

You will be asked to bring the following items:

- documentary evidence of your right to work in the UK and identity. Evidence can include a current driving licence photocard or passport and, where appropriate, change of name documentation. Some form of photographic ID must be seen by the School/Trust at this stage.
- documents confirming any educational and professional qualification(s). If this is not possible before interview, written confirmation will need to be obtained from the awarding body as part of the further pre-employment checks. Additionally, documentation relating to the registration of the applicant with an appropriate professional body will be required.

You will also need to disclose any relevant conviction, adult cautions and other matters which may affect your suitability to work with pupils. As a result of amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 in 2013 and 2020, some minor offences are now filtered and should not be disclosed to us. If you are unsure as to whether you should disclose a criminal offence or not, you should seek advice from NACRO or Unlock.

Where an individual discloses a criminal offence, we will look at each case on its own merits. This is set out more fully in section 14.

### **10. Managing the interview/selection process**

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The selection process for both internal and external applications will always include a face-to-face interview with at least one selection panel and will include questions relating to safeguarding children (see section 5).

The interview panel of a minimum of two people with panel members appropriate to the role (for example, there will be a representative from the function/department) and can offer a diverse perspective. At least one panel member will have been trained in safer recruitment practice within the last two years. At least one panel member will have taken part in the shortlisting exercise.

The interview panel should consist of a minimum of two people, with panel members appropriate to the role (for example, there will be a representative from the function/department) and who can offer a diverse perspective.

The interview should assess the merits of each candidate against the job description and person specification and explore their suitability to work with pupils.

The panel should:

- Prepare before the interviews. This should include agreeing the assessment criteria in accordance with the person specification and job description and preparing a list of questions relating to the requirements of the post that all candidates will be asked.
- Ensure that the format for the actual interview checks if any adjustments are necessary to facilitate the meeting, covers the merits of each candidate against the job description and person specification and explores their suitability to work with pupils and any employment history gaps/reference concerns.
- Agree who will ask which questions, in which order.

During the interview process, the panel members should:

- Make their own record of the interview, recording all answers.
- Explore with you and based on the information you provided in your application form and in the references:
  - Any gaps in employment or education history.
  - Frequent changes in employment.
  - Concerns expressed in any references provided pre-interview.
  - Self-declared criminal convictions, cautions, or other disclosures.
- Ask at least one open question directed towards safeguarding – this may cover:

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- Your motivation to work with pupils;
  - Your demonstrable ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with pupils;
  - Your emotional resilience in working with pupils;
  - Examples of your ability to address, react, and respond to safeguarding concerns.
- Before concluding the interview process, the panel should confirm to you (1) that the identity of the successful candidate will be checked thoroughly (2) where a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is appropriate, there will be a requirement to have a DBS check completed before employment can commence and (3) that until such time as all pre-employment checks are completed to the Trust's satisfaction, an offer is conditional.
  - The panel must also take and certify all copies of the documentation you were requested to bring to interview that were listed in the interview invitation letter.
  - In assessing each candidate, the panel should score each candidate solely from the evidence gained in the application form and interview/selection process performance against how these weigh up against the agreed selection criteria. When considering the candidate's suitability for the post, interviewers must consider whether they received a satisfactory response to questions in relation to reference concerns and employment history gaps.
  - It should be clear which candidate has performed best when scored objectively. This will enable the panel to give clear reasons for choosing one candidate over another which has nothing to do with protected characteristics.
  - Notes of the applicant's interview answers, assessments and certified document copies should be collated by the chair of the panel and sent to the local HR contact for storage.

### **11. After the interview – informing candidates**

We will contact the successful applicant by telephone to make a conditional verbal offer of employment. It will be made clear that this conditional offer is subject to all appropriate checks being undertaken and confirmed as satisfactory to the Trust.

We will follow up with a formal letter offering employment and setting out the terms and conditions of employment, including provision for any probationary period (support staff only).

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If you have been unsuccessful, we will normally advise you by telephone and will provide feedback for our decision. We will also ask you if you wish to be considered for any future vacancies that may arise.

### 12. Offering employment

Following a conditional verbal offer of employment, we will set out the proposed terms of our conditional offer in writing. The offer will confirm the conditions covering:

- Completion of the reference checking process, including verification of references. In line with best Safer Recruitment practice, the Trust will take up at least two reference requests and cover at least a period of the last five years. Where you are an internal applicant, the Head Teacher/HISP Unit Leader must verify the reference.
- Agreement of a mutually acceptable start date and the signing of a contract incorporating the Trust's standard terms and conditions of employment.
- Verification of your (1) identity with a photo ID and (2) professional and education qualifications.
  - Receipt of an enhanced DBS check with barred list information. This applies if you are a recruit to the Trust or volunteer.
  - a prohibition order check issued by the Secretary of State via the Department for Education's online service.
  - a completed health check questionnaire detailing your current state of mental and physical health and to establish if we need to put in place any reasonable adjustments.
- Confirmation of the right to work in the UK.
- In line with KCSIE, an online check of social media presence.

### 13. Compliance/Onboarding Checks

For all those undertaking regulated activity, you will not be able to commence work until all compliance/onboarding checks have been completed satisfactorily. For those in non-regulated activity and where compliance checks are outstanding, a risk assessment may be completed on an exceptional basis by the Headteacher/Executive/senior unit leader in consultation with the designated safeguarding lead and People Partner. This will consider whether you could commence your employment and under what conditions.

We do reserve the right to withdraw an offer of employment if any part of the onboarding and compliance process is unsatisfactory. This includes, but is not

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limited to, failure to provide accurate or truthful information during the recruitment process, unsatisfactory results from reference checks, background verification, or mandatory compliance checks such as right-to-work documentation or criminal record assessments where applicable. Any offer is conditional upon the successful completion of all checks, and any discrepancies or concerns identified during this process may lead to the withdrawal of the offer without liability to the Trust.

### **13.1 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check**

The DBS is responsible for administering all enhanced DBS checks. These include checks with the Police National Computer records (PNC) and other information held by the Police which is relevant.

Anyone who is appointed in a regulated activity must have an enhanced DBS check.

If you are not in a role deemed to be 'regulated activity' you must still have a DBS check and the DBS checks required for non-employees is covered at section 13.3.

The DBS will record the information collected in a certificate. We receive a copy of this online when the checks are complete. You will receive a paper copy of the certificate, and this must be provided to us before joining the Trust in whatever capacity.

### **13.2 Onboarding – Additional checks**

If you are carrying out teaching activities, you will be subject to additional checks to ensure that you are not on the barred list and prohibited from teaching.

Secretary of State Prohibition Orders prohibit an individual from working in schools, 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges, 16 -19 Academies. We will not employ anyone who has a prohibition order against them.

### **13.3 Checks for non-employees**

**13.3.1 Volunteers** – If you volunteer with us and have frequent or intensive contact with students we may require you to have an enhanced DBS check.

If you are a volunteer in regulated activity you will be required to have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

If you are a volunteer who is supervised and not in regulated activity, you may still be subject to an enhanced DBS check (without barred list information), based on our risk assessment and safeguarding policies

**13.3.2 Academy Committee Governors** - We will require you to have a clear enhanced DBS check.

**13.3.3 Contractors and self-employed staff** - We will obtain the appropriate level of DBS checks for all contractors and self-employed staff.

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**13.3.4 Agency and third-party staff** - We will require the employing agency or third party to confirm that the appropriate checks have been completed and to provide a certified copy of the original documentation.

### **13.4 Hiring from overseas and if you have lived or worked outside the UK**

On occasion we may hire an individual with the skills needed from overseas. Equally you may have lived or worked abroad for more than 3 months in the last five years.

In this instance, you will undergo the same checks as any other prospective Trust employee. However, we will also need to make checks in the country or countries in which you worked in accordance with DBS, DfE and Home Office Guidance to ensure your suitability to work with our pupils. We will require you to provide us with original police checks which are no more than 3 months' old for each country in which you have lived.

For any volunteer roles in regulated activity, the same checking process will be applied if you have lived or worked outside the UK for more than 3 months in the last five years.

## **14. Recruitment of ex-offenders**

All positions within the Trust are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. All applicants must therefore declare all previous convictions and cautions, including those which would normally be considered "spent" except those received for an offence committed in the United Kingdom if it has been filtered in accordance with the DBS filtering rules.

We will not unfairly discriminate against any applicant based on conviction or other details disclosed. If an applicant has the right skills and ability but has a criminal record they will not automatically be barred from working for us. Each case will be decided on its merits in accordance with the objective assessment criteria set out below. We 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; and
- the circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanations offered by the applicant.

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

- murder, manslaughter, rape, other serious sexual offences, grievous bodily harm or other serious acts of violence; or
- 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 Trust'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.

If the post involves some driving responsibilities, it is the Trust's normal policy to consider it a high risk to employ anyone who has been convicted of drink driving or drug offences within the last ten years.

If we receive relevant information (whether in relation to previous convictions or otherwise) from an applicant during the recruitment process, or we obtain the information through a disclosure check, we will carry out a risk assessment by reference to the criteria set out above. The assessment form must be approved by the Headteacher/Unit Leader before a position is offered or confirmed and follow seeking guidance with the Central HISP Safeguarding Lead and People Partner team before a position is offered or confirmed.

If you do not disclose a previous conviction (which should be declared) your application may be rejected, or if this is after the start of employment, the employment may be terminated with immediate effect on the grounds of gross misconduct.

A failure to disclose a previous conviction may also amount to a criminal offence. It is unlawful for the Trust to employ anyone who is barred from working with children. It is a criminal offence for any person who is barred from working with children to apply for a position at the Trust. The Trust will make a report to the police and / or the DBS if:

- it receives an application from a barred person;
- it is provided with false information in, or in support of an applicant's application; or
- it has serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with a child.

### **15. How we administer this Policy**

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We will monitor the effectiveness of this policy as set out in our Equal Opportunities Policy, by considering any complaints or concerns raised in relation to the policy and by inviting colleagues, particularly hiring managers, to give feedback to [hr@hispmat.org](mailto:hr@hispmat.org).

The One Trust Services People team is responsible for the administration of this policy.

People team/June 2025

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### **16. Appendix 1**

HISP MAT is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We want our recruitment and selection practices to reflect this commitment. All successful candidates will be subject to Disclosure and Barring Service checks along with other relevant employment checks.

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and experiences; we are committed to providing equality of opportunity at all stages of the recruitment and selection process and ensuring that candidates are treated fairly and lawfully throughout the process. Shortlisting, interviewing and selection will always be carried out without regard to protected characteristics, political affiliation or trade union membership. Reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process will be made to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged because of a declared disability. As part of our commitment to flexible working, we will consider requests in line with operational requirements.