Federation of
Westminster Special Schools
& Bi-Borough Inclusion Service

Recruitment and Selection Policy for Employees and Volunteers

Approved by Full Governing Board: October 2026
Next Review: October 2027, or earlier if statutory guidance changes

1. Introduction

1.1 Recruiting the best people to the Federation is vital for our continued success in providing the highest standards of education, and support, to our children and young people

1.2 Not appointing the right people to our roles can have a negative impact on the performance of our schools and the Bi-Borough Inclusion Service.

1.3 The Executive Headteacher, Headteachers, Head of Bi-Borough Inclusion Service and Federation Business Manager will be responsible for deciding on the arrangements to recruit to a vacant post, according to the scheme of delegated responsibility. This is with the exception of the Executive Headteacher and Headteacher posts where the Governing Board will be responsible.

1.4 In carrying out our recruitment processes we are committed to creating a safe environment for our children and young people by operating safer recruitment practices in line with statutory requirements and guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026). This policy must be read alongside the Federation Safer Recruitment Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.

1.5 We are also committed to ensuring that throughout our recruitment and selection processes no applicant is disadvantaged or discriminated against because of the protected characteristics of age, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

1.6 In the very exceptional cases where we are required to discriminate due to an occupational requirement this must be approved by the Governing Board who will provide reasons for this requirement.

1.7 Recruitment will be solely on the basis of the applicant's abilities and individual merit as measured against the criteria for the job. Qualifications, knowledge, experience and skills will be assessed at the level that is relevant to the job.

1.8 If an applicant makes the Federation aware, at any stage of the recruitment process, that they have a disability then reasonable adjustments must be considered to ensure the applicant is not disadvantaged by the process.

2. Scope and Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out our processes for recruiting, selecting and appointing any employee to work within the Federation.

3. Safer Recruitment

3.1 All recruitment must be completed in accordance with this policy and the Federation Safer Recruitment Policy so that the Federation identifies, deters

and prevents people who pose a risk of harm from working with children and young people.

3.2 The recruitment of all applicants and volunteers to our Federation must, without exception, follow the processes of safer recruitment. All offers of employment will be subject to us being satisfied that the applicant or volunteer is a suitable person to work with children and young people, with satisfactory references where applicable.

3.3 All recruitment must be planned to ensure that there is adequate time available to complete the recruitment process effectively.

3.4 Where it becomes apparent that this policy is not being followed during recruitment, the Executive Headteacher and the Federation HR Manager must be informed immediately.

3.5 All of the checks described in Sections 11 and 12 must be carried out and have been determined as satisfactory before an applicant can start their employment in the Federation.

4. Advertising

4.1 To ensure equality of opportunity, the Federation will advertise all vacant posts via the most appropriate channels to ensure the most appropriate field of applicants is obtained. Adverts will be posted on My new Term and linked to the Federation website.

4.2 Where there is a reasonable expectation that there are sufficient qualified internal candidates or where staff is at risk of redundancy, an internal advertisement may be considered appropriate.

4.3 All advertisements will have the following statement about safeguarding children and young people and the requirement to have a DBS check:

‘The Federation of Westminster Special Schools is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and therefore expects all its staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All appointments are made subject to receipt of a completed application form, satisfactory references and an Enhanced DBS Disclosure’.

5. Job Description

5.1 A job description will be required for all posts which describes the duties and responsibilities of the post. It must be up to date, accurate and specific to the role. The job description must also include a person specification which outlines all of the necessary skills, experience, qualifications and knowledge requirements for the post.

5.2 All job descriptions and person specifications must make reference to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people

6. Application form

6.1 All applicants for **paid employment** are required to fill out the standard Westminster City Council application form completed via My New term. CVs will not be accepted and therefore do not replace the application form.

6.2 The Federation requires candidates to account for any gaps or discrepancies in employment history on this application form. Where an applicant is shortlisted, these gaps will be discussed at interview.

6.3 Applicants should be aware that providing false information is an offence and could result in the application being rejected or summary dismissal if the applicant has been selected and possible referral to the police and other professional regulatory bodies.

6.4 The Federation uses its own form for **Volunteers** (who tend to be students on placement but may not necessarily be) and relies on the supporting organisation to confirm their suitability but the necessary form has to be completed.

7. Self-declaration of convictions by all applicants

7.1 The Federation requires shortlisted applicants for all posts (including volunteers) to declare all criminal convictions whether “spent” or “unspent” and include any cautions and pending prosecution at the shortlisting stage.

7.2 Such declarations will be made on an appropriate form and should be submitted in a sealed envelope, marked strictly private and confidential to the Executive Headteacher/ Headteacher/Head of Service or senior leader prior to the interview. They will discuss relevant, positive declarations confidentially with the applicant at interview. The disclosure of convictions, cautions or pending cases will not necessarily prevent employment but will be considered in the same way as positive DBS disclosures.

8. Short-listing

8.1 Applicants will be short-listed against the requirements of the person specification. The same people should carry out the short-listing and the interviews. The outcome of the short-listing process will be recorded and retained via My New Term.

The equal opportunities monitoring form must be removed from the application and not provided to the short-listing panel.

8.2 The Associate Executive Headteacher, Headteacher, Bi-Borough Inclusion Service (dependant on the post advertised) are responsible for scrutinising the application forms and identifying any gaps in employment or other areas that may affect an applicant’s suitability to work with children and young people. A satisfactory explanation for any concerns must be obtained from the applicant during the interview process. Where the application is for the Executive Headteacher post, this would also apply to the Governor’s selection panel.

9. Interviews

9.1 A face to face interview should take place for all applicants to all posts. The use of video conferencing, Zoom, Teams, Facetime or other similar technologies is acceptable for this purpose if there is a good reason why face to face cannot take place (e.g. the applicant is abroad).

9.2 All those involved in interviewing must be properly trained. At least one person on the interview panel must have possess the appropriate safer recruitment training certificate.

9.3 The purpose of the interview is to assess the merits of each applicant against the job description and person specification to establish their suitability for the post and to work with children and young people.

9.4 Interviews should be conducted with two or three interviewers on the panel depending on the seniority of the post.

9.5 Before the interview commences the interview panel should have:

(a) prepared appropriate questions for the role;

(b) prepared appropriate questions to test the applicant's suitability to work with children and young people;

(c) identified any areas for further probing, e.g., if a criminal record has been declared or if there are gaps in employment etc;

(d) agreed assessment criteria which reflects the person specification; and

(e) decided a structure to the interview and established which member of the panel will ask which questions.

9.6 A set of common questions relating to the requirements of the post will be asked of each applicant. Their response will determine whether that is followed up through further questioning.

10. Other selection methods

10.1 In addition to a face-to-face interview with the interview panel a variety of other selection methods may be used, such as:

(a) Observation of teaching practice in our Federation

(b) One or more additional panel interviews (for example, a panel made up of children and young people and /or stakeholders;

(c) A presentation;

(d) In tray exercises;

(e) Any other tasks deemed appropriate.

10.2 Those responsible for deciding the arrangements for recruitment to a specific post will determine the selection method(s). They will be relevant and

appropriate to the role and will be based on the requirements for the particular post as set out in the job description and person specification.

10.3 Candidates will be informed in advance if any selection methods are to be used in addition to a face-to-face interview and what these are.

11. Offer of employment and pre- employment checks

11.1 It may be possible to negotiate a provisional start date with the preferred candidate, however, with the exception of DBS disclosures, the checks detailed above must all be completed BEFORE a person's appointment is confirmed. In the case of DBS disclosures, the certificate must be obtained before or as soon as practicable after appointment.

If the DBS confirmation has not been received, a risk assessment must take place to determine if the applicant may begin work and what arrangements need to be made.

Once all pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed / received, an offer of employment will be made and the contract of employment issued. The contract will be issued as soon as possible but in all circumstances within 8 weeks of employment commencing.

11.2 An offer of appointment will be conditional upon completion of the checks required for the role. The checks below must be applied in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) and the Federation Safer Recruitment Policy:

- receipt of at least two satisfactory written references, one of which must be from the current or most recent employer;
- verification of identity, preferably using current photographic identification and proof of address;
- verification of the applicant's mental and physical fitness to carry out the work responsibilities, after a conditional offer and in accordance with equality legislation;
- verification of qualifications where relevant;
- verification of professional status where applicable. For teachers, this includes checking the required teaching qualification and completion of any statutory induction;
- a satisfactory enhanced DBS check, including children's barred list information where the role is regulated activity;
- for teachers, verification that the individual is not subject to a prohibition order or interim prohibition order through the Teacher Regulation Agency Employer Access service;
- for volunteers, the level of DBS and barred list check required by the role. From 1st September 2026, supervision does not prevent a volunteer role from being regulated activity. Volunteers undertaking regulated activity must have an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information before undertaking that activity;
- verification of the right to work in the United Kingdom;

- any further checks considered appropriate where the applicant has lived or worked outside the United Kingdom, including overseas criminal records information where available;
- where relevant to the role, confirmation that the applicant is not disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006 and the Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018. Disqualification by association does not apply;
- an appropriate online search of publicly available information for shortlisted candidates, as part of due diligence, to identify any incidents or issues relevant to suitability to work with children. Searches should be completed before interview where possible, documented, and any relevant concerns explored with the candidate at interview;
- for management positions where required, a section 128 direction check to establish whether the individual is prohibited from taking part in the management of an independent school, academy or free school; and
- any other checks required by law, statutory guidance or the Federation Safer Recruitment Policy for the particular role.

11.3 All checks must be confirmed in writing and recorded on the single central record (SCR) where required. Recruitment and vetting information must be retained securely and in accordance with the Federation Safer Recruitment Policy, the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Federation retention schedule.

11.4 Volunteers: DBS and barred list checks

From 1st September 2026, the supervision exemption from regulated activity no longer applies. A volunteer who teaches, trains, instructs, cares for or supervises children frequently, meets the statutory period condition, or provides personal care is undertaking regulated activity and must have an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information before beginning that activity.

Volunteers whose activity does not meet the regulated activity threshold will be subject to a written, role-specific risk assessment. This will consider the nature and frequency of the role, contact with children, supervision arrangements and any other relevant safeguarding factors. An enhanced DBS check without barred list information may be obtained where the role is legally eligible. A children's barred list check must not be requested unless there is a lawful basis.

One-off volunteers, such as a parent helping at a single supervised event, will be managed through a documented risk assessment and must remain under appropriate supervision at all times.

11.5 Online searches

The Federation will conduct proportionate online searches of publicly available information for shortlisted candidates as part of its safer recruitment due diligence. The search is intended only to identify incidents or issues that may be relevant to the candidate's suitability to work with children.

Online searches will be documented, completed before interview where possible, and any relevant concerns will be discussed with the candidate at interview. Searches will be undertaken by trained staff who understand the limitations, accuracy risks and potential bias of online information.

The Federation will not seek access to private social media accounts. Personal data obtained through a search will be handled in accordance with data protection law and the Federation's privacy information.

11.6 Data protection and record retention

All recruitment records will be processed lawfully, fairly and securely in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Federation retention schedule.

The Federation will normally retain recruitment and interview records for unsuccessful candidates for six months after the appointment decision, unless a longer period is justified and documented. Records relating to the successful candidate and completed pre-employment checks will be retained on the personnel file in accordance with the retention schedule.

Unsuccessful candidates' information will be disposed of securely at the end of the retention period. Candidates may exercise their data protection rights, including the right of access, by making a subject access request. The Federation will not limit that statutory right to the six-month retention period, although records may no longer be held after the applicable retention period.

12. References

12.1 All offers of employment will be conditional upon receipt of at least two satisfactory written references. References for shortlisted candidates will be sent for immediately after shortlisting and BEFORE interview. The only exception to this is where candidates have indicated on their application forms that that they do not wish their current employer to be contacted. In such cases, this reference will be taken up immediately after interview and prior to any offer of employment being made. One reference will always be sought prior to interview wherever possible.

12.2 References must be in writing and be specific to the job for which the candidate has applied - open references or testimonials are not acceptable. The Federation will not accept references from relatives or people writing solely in the capacity as a friend. Only references from a trusted authoritative source will be acceptable.

12.3 References will:

(a) be requested for all shortlisted applicants, including internal applicants;

(b) include the applicant’s current or most recent employer and where an applicant for a teaching post is not currently employed as a teacher, will include the applicant’s most recent employer as a teacher;

(c) ask the current employer for details of any capability history in the previous two years, and the reasons for this;

(d) be directly from the referee;

(e) not be accepted if they are ‘to whom it may concern’ letters;

(f) request information on the applicant’s suitability to work with children and young people;

(g) be requested before the interview; and

(h) ask about the referee's relationship with the candidate;

(i) specifically ask whether the referee has any concerns about the candidate's suitability to work with children and whether they would recommend the candidate for the role;

(j) ask whether there have been any substantiated safeguarding concerns or allegations about the candidate's behaviour towards children, and seek relevant factual information in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education; and

(k) be explored further with the referee and with the applicant during the interview if necessary.

12.4 Where it has not been possible to obtain references before the interview any concerns that are subsequently raised will need to be resolved before the appointment is confirmed.

12.5 Any information about past disciplinary action or allegations will be considered in the circumstances of the individual case. Cases in which an issue was satisfactorily resolved some time ago, or an allegation was determined to be unfounded or did not require formal disciplinary sanctions, and which no further issues have been raised, are not likely to cause concern. More serious or recent concerns or issues are more likely to cause concern. A history of repeated concerns or allegations over time is also likely to give cause for concern.

12.6 In order to comply with the Equality Act 2010, information relating to sickness absence will only be requested after a conditional offer of employment has been made.

13. Induction

13.1 All new employees will receive an induction programme which identifies the Federation policies, procedures and safeguarding expectations relevant to their role, including:

- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- The Staff Code of Conduct;
- The Behaviour Policy, including the Federation's approach to child-on-child abuse;
- Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026), together with any role-specific annexes or guidance identified by the Federation;
- The role and identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies;

- Procedures for reporting concerns about children and concerns or allegations involving adults.
- The induction will make clear the expectations and codes of conduct governing how staff carry out their roles and responsibilities, and completion will be recorded.

14. Probation Period

14.1 All newly appointed staff will be subject to a probationary period in accordance with WCC conditions of employment guidance.

15. Agency staff

15.1 The Federation must ensure that its arrangement with an agency requires the agency to complete all recruitment and vetting checks set out in section 11 and the Federation Safer Recruitment Policy, including an enhanced DBS check and children's barred list information where the role is regulated activity. The Federation must obtain written confirmation that the required checks have been completed and are satisfactory before the individual begins work, and must record the required information on the single central record (SCR). The Federation will verify the identity of agency staff on arrival to ensure that the person attending is the person the agency intended to refer.

16. Breaches of the policy

16.1 Any instances of this policy not being adhered to will be taken very seriously and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

16.2 Any complaint in relation to this policy, including its application will be managed through the Federation’s complaints policy or grievance policy (for existing employees).

17. Review of policy

17.1 This policy is reviewed annually by the Federation, or earlier where legislation or statutory guidance changes. The Federation will monitor its application and outcomes and will cross-check it against the Safer Recruitment Policy to ensure that both documents remain consistent.

APPENDIX 1

Appointment of the Executive Headteacher

a) The Chair of Governors meets with the Federation’s Professional Advisor to agree the job description and the detailed arrangements of the selection procedures.

b) The identified member of Federation staff or chosen external provider, advertises the vacancy and handles the administration

c) All Governors and at least one LA representative will participate in the selection procedure, with three Governors and the Professional Adviser normally present on the Shortlisting and Interview Panels.

d) The Governor Interview Panel will recommend appointment of the successful candidate to the full Governing Board for approval.

e) The identified member of Federation staff initiates the contract procedure.

Appointment of Headteachers/Head of Bi-Borough Inclusion Service and Federation staff working across FWSS

a) The Executive Headteacher will write the job description in consultation with the Governing Board.

b) The Executive Headteacher in consultation with the identified member of Federation staff advertises the vacancy and undertakes the administration.

c) The Chair of Governors, one further Governor and Executive Head short-list candidates and agree selection procedure. Informal visits to the school prior to interview are offered.

d) A Senior LA officer will be invited to attend the selection procedure for the Headteacher in an advisory capacity.

e) The Executive Headteacher and at least two Governors will participate in the selection procedure.

f) The Governor panel will recommend appointment of the successful candidate to the full Governing Board for approval.

g) The identified member of Federation staff will initiate the contract procedure.

Appointment of all other Teaching Staff

a) The Headteacher of the school concerned or Head of BIS will write the job description in consultation with the appropriate Senior Leadership Team.

b) The identified member of Federation staff will advertise the vacancy and undertake the administration.

c) The Headteacher, Deputy Headteachers, or the Assistant Headteachers and, where appropriate, the Executive Head, shortlist candidates and agree on selection procedure.

d) The Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers ~~and~~ or Assistant Headteachers participate in the selection procedure.

e) The identified member of Federation staff initiates the contract procedure.

Appointment of Teaching Assistants

a) The appropriate Headteacher will write the job description in consultation with the school's Senior Leadership Team.

b) The identified member of Federation staff will advertise the vacancy and undertake the administration.

c) Representatives of the school's Senior Leadership Team will shortlist candidates and agree the selection procedure.

d) Representatives of school's Senior Leadership Team will participate in the selection procedure.

e) The identified member of Federation staff initiates the contract procedure.

School Office Staff and Site Management

a) The Federation Business Manager will write the job description in consultation with the Headteachers/Head of Bi- Borough Inclusion Service.

b) The Federation HR Manager will advertise the vacancy and undertake the administration.

c) The appropriate Headteacher or the Head of BIS and Federation Business Manager will shortlist candidates and agree selection procedure.

d) The appropriate Headteacher or Head of BIS and Federation Business Manager will participate in the selection procedure.

e) The Federation HR Manager will initiate the contract procedure.

Temporary Staff/Supply Agency staff

a) The Headteacher will write the job description in consultation with the school's Senior Leadership Team.

b) The Business Support Team staff member with responsibility for cover management will contact agencies for details of staff available.

c) The school's Senior Leadership Team will shortlist candidates and agree the selection procedure.

d) The following staff will participate in selection procedures: Assistant/Deputy Heads as appropriate.

Volunteers and Students

a) The Headteachers and Head of BIS have the responsibility to seek and appoint volunteers. [

b) The Deputy or Assistant Headteachers have the responsibility to place and supervise students.

Friends and Relatives

The Headteacher/Head of BIS must be informed if any friend or relative of existing staff is seeking employment at the Federation. This also applies to Students and Volunteers.