

South Bank Academies Safer Recruitment Policy

1. Policy Statement

South Bank Academies (“the Trust”) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. We recognise our statutory responsibilities under:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2025
- Prevent Duty Guidance 2021
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Education Act 2002

This policy outlines how the Trust ensures safe recruitment and ongoing safe working practices across our sites, fully aligned with our overarching Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

2. Purpose and Alignment with Working Together to Safeguard Children (WT 2023)

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that South Bank Academies recruits only individuals who are safe, suitable and appropriately vetted to work with children, young people and adults at risk. In line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*, which sets national expectations for safer recruitment, vetting and safeguarding practice, the Trust embeds safeguarding, Prevent Duty and equality considerations into every stage of the recruitment process. Recruitment decisions are grounded in a child and young person-centred approach that recognises the complex safeguarding needs of Further Education learners and the influence that family and contextual factors may have on their wellbeing.

This policy ensures that all staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors are appropriately assessed for their suitability, supervised proportionately and supported to uphold the Trust’s safeguarding standards. Consistent with WT 2023’s national multi-agency child protection standards, the recruitment process seeks individuals who can demonstrate professional curiosity, respond promptly to concerns, and work effectively with safeguarding partners, including when identifying early help needs and securing statutory interventions where required.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all:

- employees
- governors
- contractors
- agency/supply staff
- volunteers
- placement students
- visiting professionals
- external organisations using the Trust’s premises

4. Recruitment Principles

South Bank Academies commits to:

- deterring unsuitable applicants
- thorough pre-employment vetting

- structured interviews with safeguarding focused questions
- Equality driven and inclusive selection practices
- transparent and accountable decision-making
- clear communication of safeguarding expectations to all prospective staff

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Hiring Managers

Hiring managers play a central role in maintaining safe recruitment practices and must ensure that every stage of the selection process reflects the Trust's safeguarding expectations. They are required to complete Safer Recruitment training every two years and to apply all elements of this policy consistently.

As part of the shortlisting and interview process, they must scrutinise applications carefully for gaps or inconsistencies and ensure that safeguarding focused questions are built into interviews. Hiring managers also contribute to ongoing quality assurance by participating in safer recruitment audits and evaluations.

Key responsibilities include:

- completing Safer Recruitment training every two years
- scrutinising applications and embedding safeguarding in interviews
- participating in safer recruitment audits

5.2 HR Department

The HR Department is responsible for coordinating the operational aspects of safer recruitment and ensuring that all vetting checks are carried out in accordance with statutory and organisational requirements. This includes maintaining the Single Central Record (SCR), processing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and barred list checks accurately, verifying identity, qualifications and right to work, and conducting online searches where appropriate.

HR also ensures that recruitment files are complete, compliant and ready for internal or external audit.

HR core duties include:

- maintaining the SCR and completing all vetting checks
- verifying identity, qualifications and right to work
- coordinating online searches and ensuring compliant recruitment files

5.3 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead oversees the safeguarding integrity of the recruitment process. The DSL ensures that recruitment decisions align with identified safeguarding risks and provides guidance on any positive disclosures or complex vetting outcomes.

They act as the liaison with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) when concerns arise during recruitment and review emerging themes to inform staff training and improvements to safeguarding practice.

The DSL's role includes:

- ensuring recruitment aligns with safeguarding risk considerations

- making decisions on positive disclosures and liaising with the LADO
- reviewing recruitment related safeguarding themes to guide training and risk reduction

6. Safer Recruitment Stages

6.1 Pre-Recruitment Planning

Before any role is advertised, job descriptions and adverts must clearly set out the safeguarding responsibilities associated with the post and describe South Bank Academies as a child and young person centred, trauma informed environment.

They should also make explicit our commitments to the Prevent Duty, equality and anti-discriminatory practice, and confirm that online checks will form part of the recruitment process. These elements help ensure that applicants understand from the outset the safeguarding expectations and values embedded in all roles across the Trust and its Schools.

Person specifications must be designed to assess applicants' safeguarding awareness, their motivation to work with young people and their understanding of the specific vulnerabilities present within an FE environment, including the needs of SEND and Looked After Children and the influence of contextual safeguarding risks.

They should also enable evaluation of each candidate's ability to work effectively with external agencies, reflecting the multiagency partnership working that is central to our safeguarding approach.

6.2 Applications

Applicants are required to complete the Trust's standard application form and provide a full and accurate employment history, including clear explanations for any gaps. They must declare any unspent or relevant spent convictions in line with our Policy Statement on the Recruitment of ex-Offenders', disclose previous safeguarding or conduct concerns and confirm their fitness to work in an education setting.

CVs alone are not accepted, as they do not provide the necessary safeguarding focused information required for safer recruitment.

Applicants must:

- complete the official application form
- provide full employment history with explanations for gaps
- make all required safeguarding and conduct disclosures

6.3 Shortlisting

Shortlisting panels are expected to review applications with a strong safeguarding focus, examining employment history, exploring any concerns and assessing candidates' understanding of Prevent Duty, inclusion, SEND, LAC needs and trauma informed practice. Panels must conduct online searches in line with statutory guidance and document their decisions clearly to ensure transparency, fairness and full accountability.

Shortlisting panels must:

- analyse applications through a safeguarding lens
- review attitudes toward Prevent, inclusion, SEND and LAC

- conduct required online searches and record decisions

6.4 Interviews

All interview panels must include at least one member trained in Safer Recruitment and explore a candidate's safeguarding awareness, Prevent Duty understanding and professional conduct expectations.

Interviews must assess motivation to work with young people, ability to recognise and escalate concerns, understanding of SEND, LAC and contextual safeguarding, and confidence in challenging unsafe behaviour. Candidates must also demonstrate appropriate knowledge of information sharing, online safety and low level concerns procedures.

Interviews will assess:

- safeguarding and Prevent awareness
- motivation, judgement and ability to challenge concerns
- understanding of SEND, LAC and contextual safeguarding
- ability to identify, escalate and share concerns appropriately

6.5 Pre-Employment Vetting Checks

Before starting, all successful candidates must complete:

- Identity Checks (verified with original documents and check for name changes / aliases)
- Right to Work
- Enhanced DBS and Barred list Check
- Two verified References, obtained from professional emails and including the most recent employer
- Overseas Criminal Records Checks
- Qualification Checks
- Online Search Checks
- Prevent Duty Suitability Checks

6.6 Conditional Offers

All offers of employment at South Bank Academies remain strictly conditional until every required vetting check has been completed to a satisfactory standard. Successful candidates must also agree to comply fully with the Trust's safeguarding, conduct, whistleblowing, online safety, Prevent and equality policies as part of their contractual obligations.

In addition, all appointments are subject to a successful probationary period, during which the individual's suitability, professional conduct and adherence to safeguarding expectations will continue to be assessed.

7. Volunteers, Contractors, Agency Staff, Visitors and Third-Party Premises Users

7.1 Volunteers

All volunteers must undergo an appropriate risk assessment before starting their role, with DBS requirements determined by whether their activity meets the definition of regulated activity. They must also receive a full safeguarding induction, including Prevent Duty expectations and the Trust's reporting procedures.

7.2 Supply/Agency Staff

Agencies supplying staff to the Trust must confirm full compliance with safer recruitment requirements and provide all Single Central Record information in advance. The Trust and its Schools reserve the right to audit this documentation to ensure accuracy and safeguarding integrity.

7.3 Contractors

Contractors working on site are required to share their safeguarding and Prevent policies with the Trust and must wear visible identification at all times. Where contractors do not have clearance for unsupervised access, they will be supervised to ensure learner safety.

7.4 Visitors and Third Party Premises Users

Any Visitors using the Trust's premises must sign in and out at reception on each visit and must be collected from and returned to reception by their host or authorised assistant. They must not be allowed to move through the Trust's premises without escort. The host is responsible for ensuring adherence to these requirements.

Any external organisation using the Trust's premises must demonstrate that they have robust safeguarding and Prevent arrangements in place, and adherence to these requirements remains a condition of hire.

7.5 LSBU Group staff

Some authorised LSBU Group staff may have access to the premises of the college. In such cases the host employer must confirm full compliance with safer recruitment requirements and provide all Single Central Register information in advance. LSBU Group staff without such authorisation and clearance must be treated in line with the visitors' provision in 7.1 above.

8. Induction

All new staff must receive training covering:

- safeguarding and child-protection procedures
- Prevent Duty and local risks
- online safety (including filtering and monitoring)
- SEND and LAC safeguarding
- equality, diversity and inclusion
- professional boundaries and conduct
- reporting low-level concerns
- site-security requirements (ID passes, access control)

Induction is mandatory before unsupervised access to learners is given.

9. Ongoing Safeguarding Culture

South Bank Academies maintains a strong safeguarding culture in which staff are expected to demonstrate professional curiosity, noticing early signs of harm, interpreting low level or contextual indicators and escalating concerns without delay. Recruitment therefore seeks individuals who understand early help processes, multiagency thresholds and the importance of acting promptly and responsibly.

All staff must also uphold the Trust's zero tolerance approach to discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, extremist views, unsafe conduct and any breaches of professional boundaries, ensuring that safeguarding remains a shared and consistent priority across the organisation.

10. Allegations Management

All staff are made aware of the allegations procedures described in the Safeguarding Policy. Key principles:

- concerns about staff must be reported immediately to HR and the DSL
- cases are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- staff may be suspended as a safeguarding measure
- records will be maintained securely and separately
- referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will be made when required

11. Confidentiality & Information Sharing

Recruitment requires staff who understand how UK GDPR applies to safeguarding and who recognise that, in certain circumstances, information may be shared without consent when a child is at risk. They must be able to apply the "serious harm test" appropriately and follow the Trust's established information sharing protocols to ensure that confidentiality is balanced with the need to protect children effectively.

12. Single Central Record (SCR)

The SCR will include, for all staff and relevant personnel:

- identity checks
- barred list and DBS checks
- right to work
- qualifications
- overseas checks if applicable
- references
- safer recruitment training dates

13. Monitoring & Review

This policy is reviewed annually by HR, DSL and AEB. It will also be approved by Trustees and evaluated using safeguarding data, recruitment trends and audit findings.

Reviewed: March 2026

Next Review: March 2027