

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd

Safer Recruitment Policy



1. Introduction

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd (LAFS) aim to provide a safeguarding culture and environment where learners feel confident to raise issues and disclose incidents relating to their welfare and safety knowing that staff will respond appropriately to these. This policy sets out how LAFS will ensure this through safe recruitment practices, that ensure only those suitable to work with children are recruited and by holding expectations of high standards of personal and professional conduct from staff.

2. Safe Recruitment : General Principles

LAFS recognises safer recruitment practices are an essential part of creating a safe learning environment and will carry out the processes set out in this policy to ensure those who are not suitable to work with children are identified during recruitment processes and prevented from taking up posts. When recruiting staff, LAFS will follow Part 3 of the Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance (DfE 2025) / Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

- LAFS will carry out extensive checks and enquiries on applicants for all positions, including voluntary and support roles.
- No staff member or volunteer will be allowed to take up posts until all checks and enquiries required for that position have been satisfactorily completed.
- Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service will be carried out - all at an Enhanced Level
- Staff who are involved in recruitment have received Safer Recruitment training offered through an accredited training provider and no interview should go ahead unless at least one member of the panel has undertaken safer recruitment training.

The Director: Dave Churchward has received Safer Recruitment training.

- The Director has day-to-day responsibility for the recruitment of staff.
- Staff with responsibility for carrying out recruitment checks will ensure they have a copy of any relevant documents or take relevant issue numbers from documents as proof that the document has been seen.
- Checks will be taken out on existing staff where concerns arise regarding their suitability to work with children or a person moves into a post that is a regulated activity.
- At LAFS, the Director is responsible for keeping a Single Central Record of all staff and volunteers who work at the LAFS and any checks taken. The records will include details of all checks carried out and the outcome of these checks or any certificates obtained and will be recorded.

3. Advertising and recruitment

When recruiting, LAFS will ensure that all advertisements for posts are clear that the role is a safeguarding role for which successful candidates should be considered suitable to work with children and that successful applicants will be expected to agree to undergo DBS and other checks as part of safer recruitment practices.

3.1 Advertisements

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd will ensure the following information is included in any advertisement:

- A statement of the LAFS' commitment to safeguarding and that all applicants will be subject to checks
- Information about the role (job description/person specification) and the safeguarding responsibilities that are part of the role
- The skills, experience, knowledge, abilities, attitudes and behaviours required
- The safeguarding requirements of the role, including level of contact with children and whether the post involves a regulated activity
- Whether the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (where specific spent convictions must be disclosed).

For further guidance on exemptions please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-filtering-guidance>

3.2 Application Forms

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd will ensure all candidates for posts are able to access their Child Protection Policy online so that they are aware of the Forest School's approach to safeguarding and safer recruitment and the expectations of staff in implementing these. The information will include a clear statement that it is an offence to apply for posts involving regulated activity when barred.

Application forms will ask for the following information:

- Personal details of the candidate including current and former names, current address and national insurance number;
- Details of their present (or last) employment and reason for leaving;
- Full employment history, (since leaving school, including education, employment and voluntary work) including reasons for any gaps in employment;
- Qualifications, the awarding body and date of award;
- Details of referees/references (see section 4.2 for further information);
- A statement of the personal qualities and experience that the candidate believes are relevant to their suitability for the post and how they meet the person specification.

3.3 Interview and Selection

LAFS will inform shortlisted candidates that it is likely an online search will be conducted as part of due diligence checks. One of the key purposes of the interview is to establish whether the candidate is suitable to work with children. For this reason, LAFS will structure interviews to enable a full exploration of the candidate's

knowledge, skills and experiences of teaching and/or working with children as well as their attitudes and motivations to safeguarding. The interview will also explore any unexplained gaps in employment or frequent changes of employment, any information on allegations or disciplinary actions, or any other areas of concern.

4. Checks and Vetting for Forest School Staff

4.1 Checks to be completed:

LAFS will take out checks in order to verify the following information for all new staff:

- The applicant's identity must be verified from their passport, birth certificate or other photographic ID and proof of address must be provided. LAFS will follow government guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identity-proofing-and-verification-of-an-individual>
- The applicant's right to work in the UK must be evidenced through documentation. Only original documentation will be accepted and its validity checked in the presence of the applicant. The school/college will follow government guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identity-proofing-and-verification-of-an-individual>
- Where the applicant will be involved in regulated activity, an enhanced DBS check will be taken out, including information from the barred list. If the applicant will begin work before an enhanced DBS check can be completed, a barred list check will be obtained.
- Where the applicant has been living abroad, similar enquiries will be made in the country of origin relating to the applicant's qualifications and suitability to teach, including DBS checks. For criminal records checks abroad, LAFS will follow government advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants>

Schools/colleges/education establishments can get further information at:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-teachers-from-overseas>

- For staff working with reception class children under 5 or children under 8 in wraparound care settings, LAFS will make checks as to whether the individual has been disqualified from working in these settings. LAFS will follow the government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disqualification-under-the-childcare-act-2006/disqualification-under-the-childcare-act-2006>

- Enquiries will be made regarding the applicant's state of physical and mental health and the extent that it may affect their capacity to carry out their role.
- LAFS will keep copies of the following documents on staff personnel files:
 - Documents used as proof of identity such as passports or driving licences;
 - A summary of the DBS certificate (but all other documents relating to the DBS check must be destroyed);

- Documents that prove the staff member's right to work in the UK (failure to do so can result in a fine for employing illegal workers).

4.2 References

- Applicants will be asked to provide a full employment history and details of at least 2 referees, including previous and recent employers, and who should be a senior member of staff with the authority to provide references. References from colleagues will not be acceptable.
- All references will be taken up prior to interview and will be requested directly from the referee, including references for internal candidates.
- Any information provided by applicants as part of an application process will be verified with independent sources and any reference received electronically will be checked to verify the originating source.
- Referees will be contacted to resolve any issues that emerge from the references provided, for example to clarify and verify information provided by the applicant and explore any discrepancies from the information provided on the application form.
- References will be taken up from current employers only; if the applicant is not currently employed, verification will be sought from their previous place of work as to the dates the applicant was employed and the reasons for leaving the post.

4.3 DBS checks

In order to ensure that people who work at LAFS are suitable to do so and are not barred from working with children, the school/college will apply to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for police checks and other barred list information as part of the recruitment process. An Enhanced DBS check will be taken out on all staff. Full DBS checks with barred list checks will also be carried out on unpaid volunteers who regularly work unsupervised at LAFS and whose work means they have an opportunity for regular contact with children. LAFS has robust procedures for day to day staff management and supervision and clear procedures for reporting and acting on concerns. Staff carrying out roles involving regulated activity will be suitably supervised on a regular basis by senior staff carrying out a similar role. LAFS will expect successful candidates to provide a DBS certificate as soon as practicable following appointment so that information on the disclosure can be considered. LAFS will consider any disclosures to decide if the candidate is suitable to work with children and will take into account the number and nature of disclosures, their seriousness and when offences occurred. Decisions not to appoint following DBS disclosure will be carefully recorded giving details of how the decision was reached.

LAFS will follow the DBS code of practice available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dbs-check-requests-guidance-for-employers>

LAFS will ensure that all DBS checks carried out on staff are renewed after 3 years of the original DBS disclosure.

4.4 Checks for volunteers

The Director will ensure that the following are carried out in relation to unpaid volunteers such as parents who accompany pupils on school outings or provide help:

- The Director will carry out a risk assessment to establish whether a volunteer will be carrying out a regulated activity and decide what level of checks are needed in relation to their proposed role.
- Volunteers who are carrying out a regulated activity, for example being left unsupervised with children will be subject to an enhanced DBS check, including barred list information.
- New volunteers who are not carrying out regulated activity but who have an opportunity for regular contact with children will be subject to an enhanced DBS check but not a barred list check.
- LAFS will ensure that all volunteers are competent to carry out the duties assigned to them and are only assigned duties that are suitable to their qualification and experience.
- Volunteers carrying out regulated activity but for whom a DBS check has not been carried out will be suitably supervised by a member of staff at all times at a level that ensures the safety of pupils.
- All volunteers will be fully inducted in relation to all LAFS policies and procedures.

Policy written by: Dave Churchward

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