

# RAISING THE STANDARD

ABLS Briefing Note

May 2018

## Checking backgrounds for staff recruitment

The challenge of recruiting the best candidates for the job has always proved greater for ELT schools than many other educating organisations or sectors. Checking individuals' backgrounds can be particularly difficult for employers facing a highly transient workforce, a multiplicity of different approaches across law enforcement agencies and the time incurred in running police checks.

The main source of official information to employers is the Disclosure and Barring Service. It formed from a combination of the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority following a review in 2011. The body is still sponsored by the Home Office and provides similar checks to those provided under the CRB.

Employers have other means available to them to confirm suitability for role of course. References are a staple requirement of all good recruitment systems, although a tendency toward minimalist references has slightly reduced their impact on decision-making. Document checks for qualifications and experience are also standard but require rigour in application.

Employers in other sectors are beginning to use social media channels to consider the character and approach of job applicants. This shift from a wholly formally-documented process to a much more holistic, and much less professionally-focused, approach will worry many and count against some.

### How to recruit well

Given the importance of good staff to a school's performance and reputation, it is clear that choosing the right people is a key quality assurance measure. Clearly defined processes should be applied by trained and trustworthy staff.

Training of staff undertaking recruitment should include guidance on handling private data, guidelines on recruiting fairly, advice on identifying the correct documentation and a document storage system. The process can be built around the evidence the school requires to inform recruitment decisions.

Organisations offering services to the junior market should be fully conversant with the DBS checking process. Schools are frequently unaware of the efficient Update Service for enhanced checks and of the need to limit retention of original DBS certificates on file. The service currently costs £13 per year for applicant registration and is free for volunteers.

### Accreditation Body for Language Services

PO BOX 316, Great Yarmouth NR30 9EP

+44 (0)1493 393471

admin@ablsaccreditation.co.uk

www.ablsaccreditation.co.uk

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*"It is also important to note that around 94 per cent of certificates are clear and that a DBS check is one of the key pieces of information that form part of any organisation's recruitment decision and should be considered alongside other information."*

**The Disclosure and Barring Service**

[The Independent](#), April 2018

# Relevant ABLS Criteria

Most criteria relating to staff recruitment are grouped in Section 3 Management & Administration. Within that section, 3.4 Employment Documentation considers the minimum document requirements for recruitment and selection of staff, including CVs, copies of all relevant qualifications, DBS checks and references.

There are references in other sections - mostly notably Academic Management and the Welfare sections - which consider the training and background of individuals in key management roles. The Standard generally expects staff to be recruited with the necessary minimum skills and experience for the role in question. There is some flexibility for trading in the role, particularly in relation to welfare roles, where training should be regularly undertaken and guidelines are more likely to change.

At time of print, the ABLS Standard requires different levels of DBS and suitability declarations - enhanced checks for school staff and accommodation leads for junior provision but a combination of standard checks and suitability declarations for adult provision. Review the inspection handbook or contact us for more details.

## View from the Inspectorate

Inspectors look for a methodical approach to staff recruitment and review school systems in a similar way. One inspector will check all staff files and look to find evidence of application of the key criteria listed in the section above. In large organisations, this may be a sample test, but in most inspections, it is a checklist of the criteria in section 3.4, by staff member. Inspectors will raise queries where evidence is missing or requires further explanation. They will also look for regularity of checks against existing staff, particularly around suitability to work with juniors. Checks should be confirmed rather than certificates provided.

Inspectors are interested in seeing additional recruitment checks or approaches, particularly measures taken to ensure the quality of teaching provision. These have included planning a sample lesson as part of an interview, video-conference interviews of teachers based overseas and processes to gain DBS equivalents from other countries.

There is an increasing focus on checking that schools have seen applicants' original certificates of qualification given the number of forged documents available in some regions. Inspectors will expect to see a uniform approach to checking of qualifications, including confirmation by a senior manager that the original has been seen.

At the same time as assessing recruitment processes, inspectors will consider employment documentation. Without confirming the role, it is sometimes difficult to assess the recruitment process. It is therefore helpful for the inspector and general good practice, to group all documents relating to an individual staff member.

## Useful links

Click on the following organisations to receive further advice on this area:

- [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) and the [DBS Update Service](#)
- [The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development](#)
- [ACAS - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service](#)
- [Individual and Employer rights and responsibilities - Gov.uk](#)

*The ABLS Briefing Notes are designed to help schools consider how to improve school management. ABLS does not accept any responsibility for third party information. Schools must critically review all materials and advice, identify statutory obligations for their geographical area of operation and review the Inspection Handbook for current criteria.*

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