THE MERCIAN TRUST

Safer Recruitment Policy

Effective from:

December 2025

Approved by:

People & Culture Committee

Responsibility:

Director of People and Organisational Development

Policy changes since the last review

- New Policy December 2025

Review process:

This policy will be reviewed according to The Mercian Trust's Policy Schedule outlined in its Scheme of Delegation. If there are any changes in legislation or legal requirements, an earlier review will be conducted to ensure compliance and relevance.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Mercian Trust are committed to adhering to an efficient, fair and transparent recruitment and selection process that is in line with the Equality Act 2020 and safer recruitment practices.

1.2 This policy:

1.2.1 Explains how we make sure that we avoid discrimination and any unfairness in recruitment.

1.2.2 Explains how we incorporate special cases, such as agency workers and those selected for redundancy, into our recruitment processes.

1.2.3 Highlights our commitment to safer recruitment.

1.3 Our aim is to ensure that all candidates have a positive experience when they apply for a role within the Mercian Trust.

1.4 This Policy does not form part of your contract of employment. We reserve the right to amend or remove this Policy.

1.5 This Policy applies to all external and internal candidates or prospective candidates for employment vacancies within our business.

2 An overview of the recruitment process

2.1 Our recruitment process for any vacancy is set out in the Recruitment and Onboarding Process and Workflow, which is available on Mercian HR Portal on Skolon.

2.2 All applicants for any position will be assessed objectively on their abilities and individual merits against the relevant job criteria, in accordance with the Trust's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy.

2.3 For all roles there will be a job description and person specification which will be approved by a variety of roles including business services, headteacher and HR. This is to ensure objectivity and scrutiny to business need and avoid any unlawful discrimination in expectation for the post. Shortlisting will be conducted by at least 2 recruitment panel members, of which one is safer recruitment trained.

2.4 When selecting an appropriate recruitment panel, the following considerations should be made;

- Does anyone on the panel have a close or personal relationship to any of the candidates that could compromise the impartiality or fairness of an recruitment decision? Any person involved in the recruitment selection process whose impartiality is compromised in any way in relation to an applicant must declare it immediately to the HR Team and, if required, withdraw from the recruitment process either completely or in relation to that applicant.

- Does anyone being on the panel cause a potential conflict of interest?

- Is the panel as diverse as possible to help bring a range of backgrounds and perspectives to the decision making?
- Are at least 2 members of the panel safer recruitment trained?
- Have panel members received EDIB training?

2.5 Employment History Checks and Online checks are completed and references are requested (where the candidate has provided permission) ahead of interview stage.

2.6 Successful candidates will not be able to start their position at the Trust unless all safer recruitment checks are satisfactorily completed and any relevant risk assessment have been done and approved.

3 Questions about health and reasonable adjustments

3.1 We will not generally ask candidates any questions about their health or any disabilities before any job offer is made. However, we may do so in the following circumstances:

3.1.1 To find out whether a candidate is able to carry out an assessment which forms part of the application process.

3.1.2 To understand whether a candidate would be able to carry out a function which is central to the job.

3.1.3 To find out whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to allow the candidate to take part in our recruitment processes.

3.1.4 For the purposes of equal opportunities monitoring. Please note we will store any information provided anonymously and separately from the candidate's application. Further details can be found below.

3.1.5 To support positive action in employment for disabled people.

3.2 Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy.

4 Internal and external recruitment

4.1 We have a policy of advertising all vacancies internally on our intranet as well as externally. Existing employees may apply for vacancies if they have the appropriate qualifications, experience and skills. They should speak with their line manager in advance for guidance.

4.2 For each vacancy which arises, we will consider the needs of the Trust and what we are aiming to achieve from the recruitment process. This will involve consideration of whether the vacancy should be advertised internally before any external advertisement.

4.3 Vacancies will usually be advertised in a sufficient variety of media to reach a broad cross section of potential applicants.

4.4 When an internal candidate is hired for a new role, they will be required to work their contractual notice period in the school and/or the role that they are leaving. There may be an exception to this where the Headteacher of the school that an individual is leaving agrees an earlier release date and/or there is a directive from the Trust Executive due to an identified need or risk within the Trust, that requires the individual to move to the new school with immediate effect or earlier than the end of the contractual notice period.

5 Our commitment to avoiding discrimination and unfairness in our recruitment

5.1 We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all applicants and acting in compliance with our Diversity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging policy.

5.2 The Headteacher, Senior Leader and interview panel should take care to avoid specifying requirements for the position which are potentially discriminatory on the grounds of age, sex, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability.

5.3 We take the following steps to avoid discrimination and unfairness in our recruitment processes:

5.3.1 Candidates have the right to request any reasonable adjustments to help them with the recruitment process if they have a disability. We will consider all requests made and action where reasonable and possible.

5.3.2 Our application forms do not require the submission of any details relating to protected characteristics other than for equal opportunities monitoring. Monitoring information will be stored separately. Submitted monitoring forms will not be viewed by any person actively involved in the recruitment process for the role in question.

5.3.3 Anyone who is actively involved in recruitment (whether as an interviewer or otherwise) receives Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training which is regularly updated and will include training on unconscious bias and how to avoid it.

5.3.4 We keep our recruitment marketing processes under review to make sure that we reach a broad range of potential candidates. For example, we consider advertising using several forms of media.

5.3.5 We ask for Right to Work documentation at the same stage in the recruitment process for all candidates.

5.3.6 We ensure that recruitment decisions are not made by one individual – to facilitate a breadth of opinion is taken into account and to reduce the impact of any unconscious bias.

5.3.7 Standardise aspects of our recruitment processes so that candidates are judged on objective criteria and standards in certain areas e.g. candidates are asked the same set of questions, which are agreed in advance of the interview by the interview panel.

5.3.8 When interviews are held, all candidates will be given the same opportunity to demonstrate they are the best person for the role and to ask questions of the interviewers.

6 Safer Recruitment

6.1 We are committed to ensuring the statutory guidance on safer recruitment in the Keeping Children Safe in Education is followed. The most up to date guidance should be used.

6.2 Our recruitment workflow has been produced to ensure that it supports the Safeguarding policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

6.3 Safer recruitment training is undertaken every 5 years and carried out by the Trust's Director of Safeguarding.

6.4 When recruiting, the School will decide as early as possible who will be on the interview panel, ensuring there is at least one person who is safer recruitment trained. A senior member of the teaching and/or Associate staff from another school can take part, where deemed necessary and appropriate.

6.5 Our Recruitment and Onboarding Process and Workflow incorporates safer recruitment principles. The Trust's HR team provide advice to the Headteacher or interview panel on principles of safer recruitment.

7 Special situations: redundant employees, agency workers and fixed-term workers

7.1 Employees who have been provisionally selected for redundancy will be made aware of all vacancies existing within the business and have the opportunity to be consider for any suitable alternative vacancies. They will be kept informed should any new vacancies arise whilst they are an employee of the Trust.

7.2 Agency workers and those on fixed-term contracts of employment are able to view any vacancies which become available with the Trust, through the career pages on the Trust's website.

8 Expenses

8.1 Any expenses incurred in travelling to or attending any interview or assessment with us are the sole responsibility of the candidate. We will not refund any expenses.

9 Data Protection

9.1 All information and documentation collated in relation to candidates as part of our recruitment processes will retained. Documentation in relation to unsuccessful external candidates will be retained for a period of 6 months and destroyed by shredding thereafter. Documentation in relation to successful candidates should be retained in the individual's HR file.

9.2 We will keep information in relation to candidates collated as part of any equality and diversity monitoring processes anonymously. We collect this information on a voluntary basis to monitor equality of opportunity and treatment to enable equality

to be promoted or maintained. We will not share the information collated with any member of personnel involved in the recruitment process.

9.3 Further information can be found in our Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice.

10 Complaints or Feedback

10.1 All candidates should be asked if they felt the recruitment process was fair at the end of the interview. Any concerns raised should be dealt with at that point by the recruitment panel.

10.2 It is the recruiting manager's responsibility (or a panel member delegated by them) to provide verbal feedback to unsuccessful candidates if requested.

10.3 If any candidate is unhappy with the way we have handled their application, then they should raise this immediately with the Mercian Trust HR Team by emailing recruitment@merciantrust.org.uk.