

CHILD SAFETY RECRUITMENT POLICY

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 23rd November 2016

Recruitment checklist

Robust recruitment processes help ensure the best applicants are employed. From advertising through to conducting interviews and checking the background of applicants, it is important that each step is done consistently and thoroughly with child safety in mind.

When recruiting at Ballarat Secondary College, we will work through the following steps, each with 'child safety in mind':

- development of selection criteria
- advertising vacancies
- face-to-face [Working with Children Checks](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au>
- [police record checks and identity checks](http://www.police.vic.gov.au) <www.police.vic.gov.au> (including international police record checks where necessary)
- reference checks over the telephone with recent line managers
- probation periods

Selection Criteria

Developing appropriate selection criteria for the position is a valuable first step to reducing the risk of appointing someone who poses a child safety risk. It will also ensure that applicants have the specific knowledge and skills required for the position.

Selection criteria for teachers to include:

- Teaching Staff –
 - Demonstrated high level written and verbal communication skills and high level interpersonal skills including the capacity to develop constructive relationships with students, parents and other staff.
- ES Staff –
 - Demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively with members of the school community including students and the capacity to provide support and/or attendant care to students where necessary.
 - Capacity to work cooperatively with a range of people including teachers, education support, students and parents.

Advertising

Advertising for positions provides a good opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to child safety and deter would-be offenders. All job advertisements to include the following statement:

Ballarat Secondary College is committed to being a 'Child Safe' school with an expectation that all staff commit to our Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct. Appropriate rigorous reference and background checking will be undertaken for this selection process, including a Working with Children Check and police record and identity check. We are committed to commitment to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We are also committed to meeting the needs of all students, including those with a disability, indigenous students and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Interviews

The interview process is a very important step in selecting the most appropriate applicant for Ballarat Secondary College and in identifying any people who may pose a risk to children. We need to allow sufficient time to plan and prepare for the interview process, and form an interview panel with a diverse range of experience and skills to carry out the interview. All panel members need to ensure they have a clear understanding of what skills and expertise the position requires with child safety always at the forefront of their decision making.

Where possible and relevant we should seek to include Aboriginal peoples, people from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background and people with a disability on the interview panel.

An open-ended style of behavioural-based questioning will give us insight into the applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability. Behavioural-based questions and questions about motives for wanting to work with children can be useful.

Interview panel members should take notice of their own thoughts and feelings when interacting with the applicant. Ask for more information if the applicant does not provide sufficient information in his or her responses.

Did you notice any warning signs such as:

- Unexplained lengthy gaps in employment history
- The applicant is evasive or inconsistent in his or her answers
- The applicant says they do not value or 'need' supervision

Pre-employment screening

Screening applicants (including for paid and volunteer positions) is a good tool for helping to prevent people who may abuse children from entering our school.

Police checks

It is important to be upfront and ask the applicant if they have any criminal convictions, formal disciplinary action taken against them, or any finding of improper or unprofessional conduct. This could involve the applicant signing a declaration as part of an application form.

This can also be covered in a face-to-face interview. This may be challenging for the interview panel, particularly if the person is already known to the panel, but the applicant's response should demonstrate a sufficient level of professionalism as well as an understanding of our obligations. To help introduce this difficult topic, we could state that we have some specific questions about child safety because our school takes child safety seriously.

- **Have we undertaken a police record check (which includes identity check)?**
- If addressed during a face-to-face interview, did we take notice of how the applicant responds to the questions with regard to his or her verbal response and body language?
- Have we included a question about whether the applicant has any criminal convictions, cautions, other legal or pending cases, including formal disciplinary action, which may affect their suitability to work with children?

Working with Children Check

Under the *Working with Children Act 2005*, people who are doing child-related work, and who are not exempt¹, need a Working with Children Check. This applies to both paid and volunteer workers. Full details of the [Working with Children Check process](#) can be found on the Working with Children website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au>.

Does the applicant hold a valid Working with Children Check, if required? Have we [checked the validity of their Working with Children Check](#) (Business Manager) <https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj> ?.

OR

- If the applicant does not hold a valid Working with Children Check, and it is required, has the applicant provided evidence that they have applied for a Working with Children Check, and does your school have processes to follow up pending applications?
- Has the applicant provided us with evidence of their Working with Children Check, or evidence of their application for a Working with Children Check?

Referee checks

The interview panel should always talk to at least two referees as this can provide insight into the applicant's character and skills. Line managers, particularly the most recent, are likely to provide you with the most accurate reference. Where possible, referees that can provide insights into the applicant's experience working with children should be contacted.

- Have we spoken to at least two of the referees by telephone? Did they confirm the name and position provided by the applicant?
- Has the applicant provided their most recent line manager as a referee? If not, have they provided us with a satisfactory reason?
- Do the referees provided by the applicant include line managers who can be objective, rather than colleagues or friends?

When speaking with the referees, you should seek to establish the referee's relationship with the applicant, including:

- how long the applicant and referee worked together
- the specifics of the position
- the applicant's perceived strengths and weaknesses
- whether the referee would hire the person again, particularly in a role working with children, and if they have any concerns about the applicant working with children.

Ask referees directly about any concerns they may have about the applicant working with children. To help introduce this difficult topic, you could say you have some specific questions about child safety because your school takes child safety seriously.

Take note of any pauses or gaps in the referee's responses.

Ask behaviour-based questions like:

- 'Would you employ this person again?'
- Do you have any concerns about the applicant's attitude towards Aboriginal peoples / people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds / people with a disability?'
- 'Do you have any concerns about the applicant working with children?'
- What did the applicant do when...[for example, they had to comfort a distressed child]?'

¹ For example, teachers and police officers are exempt because they undergo other thorough background checking.

Additional checks

Additional checks will confirm the identity of the applicant and that their responses have been truthful.

- Did you see a certified copy of the applicant's qualifications (if required)?
- Have you checked the identity of the applicant (for example, that their driver's licence/passport has the same name they have provided you)?

Probation periods

Probation periods can help you assess a new staff member's performance and suitability for the job before confirming their permanent employment. If you have any concerns about the person working with children, you should seriously consider whether you want them to remain in the job and the school.

The length of probation periods can vary and are usually between three and six months.

Consider whether the person should receive closer supervision and additional training throughout the probation period. A probation period can offer an opportunity to set goals with new staff members and identify training, supervision and other support needs.

Induction

Following appointment, new staff members will be given a copy of the staff handbook which includes the College Code of Conduct and the College Child Safety Code of Conduct. The staff member will be required to sign off on having read, understood and be willing to abide by the code of conduct at all times.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's three year review cycle or prior as a result of any updated DET requirements.