

Roles and Responsibilities in Headteacher Recruitment

Maintained Schools Only

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Introduction

In a maintained school, the governing body is responsible for appointing the headteacher in accordance with the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009. The governing body must notify the local authority (LA) in writing of any headteacher vacancy, advertise the post (unless it considers it has good reason not to), and appoint a selection panel to shortlist, interview and recommend a candidate. The full governing body must ratify the panel's recommendation.

Who the employer is depends on the school category. In community, voluntary-controlled and community special schools, the LA is the employer and has the right to attend proceedings (including interviews) to offer advice; the governing body must seek the LA's agreement to appoint its chosen candidate. In foundation, voluntary-aided and foundation special schools, the governing body is the employer and may choose to give advisory rights to the LA or the diocese.

BDSIP, the Local Authority and Schools HR Advisers provide professional advice and support throughout the recruitment process. Responsibility for recruitment administration, recruitment checks, contractual documentation and appointment decisions remains with the Governing Body and School.

Every maintained school must have a headteacher. If there is a gap between the current headteacher leaving and the new appointment starting, the governing body must ensure a member of staff is appointed to carry out the functions of headteacher on an acting basis. This arrangement cannot continue indefinitely and should be formalised as soon as possible.

Note: *The selection panel must operate in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 throughout the process, ensuring fairness, transparency and the elimination of discrimination at every stage.*

STAGE 1 | PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Chair of Governors

- **Notify the LA:** Inform the local authority in writing of the headteacher vacancy, as required by the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009. Confirm with the LA how it wishes to exercise its advisory rights.
- **Commission support:** Commission BDSIP and/or LA HR support where agreed.
- **Acting headteacher cover:** Where there will be a gap, agree arrangements for an acting headteacher (often the deputy) and keep the LA informed.
- **Appoint the selection panel:** Establish a selection panel consisting of at least three governors in accordance with the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009. Panel members should declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest before participating in the process.

Needs Analysis

Before defining the role, the governing body (with support from BDSIP and HR if commissioned) should carry out a needs analysis of the school. This should consider:

- The school's current strengths, priorities and areas for development
- The leadership qualities, skills and experience required
- The School's strategic priorities, future direction and leadership requirements.
- The appropriate pay range (Individual School Range) for the post, in line with the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document

The needs analysis informs the job description, person specification and advert, and is critical to the success of the process.

STAGE 2 | DEFINING THE ROLE AND ADVERTISING

Chair of Governors and Selection Panel

- Agree the job description and person specification with the governors, informed by the needs analysis, the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and the Headteachers' Standards
- Agree the salary range (Individual School Range) for the post
- Approve the advert and recruitment timeline; advertise the post unless there is good reason not to

Note: The NPQH is no longer a mandatory requirement for headship. It may be included as a desirable criterion in the person specification, but not as essential.

BDSIP Adviser (where commissioned)

- Guide the creation of the advert, job description, person specification and recruitment pack
- Advise on how to assess candidates against the agreed criteria
- Recommend appropriate assessment tasks and interview questions

Departing Headteacher (or other Senior Leader)

- Support the governors by providing contextual information about the school's needs, priorities and current position
- Help locate information needed for the recruitment pack (e.g. school data, prospectus, Ofsted reports)
- Ensure a smooth handover of knowledge to inform the process, while maintaining appropriate boundaries and not influencing the selection decision
- May provide contextual information and professional advice but should not participate in the appointment decision where a conflict of interest exists.

School Business Manager, Office Manager or HT/EHT's PA

- Assemble the recruitment pack (including application forms), with guidance from the BDSIP Adviser if commissioned
- Coordinate the advertisement and manage incoming applications
- Distribute application packs to the selection panel ahead of shortlisting

Candidate Visits

- Where appropriate, candidates may be offered visits to the School prior to shortlisting or interview.
- All candidates should be treated consistently and provided with equivalent information.
- Candidate visits should not form part of the formal assessment process unless this has been clearly communicated to all candidates.

STAGE 3 | SHORTLISTING

Governor Selection Panel

- Complete safer recruitment training (at least one panel member must have done so; all should where possible)
- Pre-read all applications and independently score each against the person specification criteria; be prepared to evidence scoring decisions
- Attend the shortlisting meeting (duration dependent on the number of applications); all panel members should attend, as absence at shortlisting should preclude involvement at interview
- Select candidates for interview based on the agreed criteria

BDSIP Adviser

- Facilitate and support the shortlisting process and shortlisting meeting.
- Advise the selection panel on fair, unbiased and safer recruitment practice, including compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

LBB School's HR Adviser

- Provide employment, procedural, equality and safer recruitment advice where involved in the recruitment process.
- Advise on any employment law queries that arise

References (School/ designated panel member)

- Request and obtain references in accordance with safer recruitment requirements.
- References should be scrutinised for completeness, consistency and any safeguarding concerns. Advice should be sought from Schools HR where concerns arise.
- Ensure all statutory safer recruitment reference requirements are completed in accordance with current safeguarding guidance.
- References should be scrutinised appropriately and any safeguarding concerns, conduct matters, discrepancies or employment issues should be explored before a final appointment decision is made.

School Business Manager, Office Manager or PA

- Draft invitation-to-interview letters, adhering to safer recruitment requirements (i.e. requesting documents and permissions for pre-appointment checks), with guidance from the BDSIP Adviser if commissioned
- Notify unsuccessful applicants of the outcome of their application

Online Searches

Online searches should be undertaken in accordance with current safeguarding requirements. Any concerns identified should be explored with the candidate before a final appointment decision is made.

STAGE 4 | INTERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

Governor Selection Panel

- Be available for all agreed interview and assessment activities. (usually two full days)
- Observe and score candidates against the task and interview criteria
- Participate in the panel discussion to reach a decision based on evidence
- Maintain detailed and objective notes throughout all assessment activities, interviews, presentations and panel discussions. Records should be sufficiently detailed to evidence appointment decisions, support audit requirements and enable meaningful feedback to be provided to unsuccessful candidates where requested.

- Ensure assessment records, scoring sheets and interview notes are retained as part of the recruitment record.

Note: *In community and voluntary-controlled schools, the LA is entitled to attend all proceedings, including interviews, for the purpose of giving advice. The governing body must consider any advice given before making a decision.*

BDSIP Adviser

- Organise the interview day timetable(s) and design assessment tasks to test candidates against the agreed criteria
- Prepare letter templates for the various interview stages
- Provide educational guidance and expertise throughout the process
- Observe the interviews and provide advice regarding the application of agreed assessment criteria, safer recruitment principles and fair scoring practices (including gathering feedback from the staff panel).

LBBD School's HR Adviser

- Attend interviews where employment, procedural, governance, equality or safer recruitment advice is required.
- Advise on any procedural or legal queries during the process

School Business Manager, Office Manager or PA

- Organise staff, pupils and rooms according to the interview day timetable(s)
- Print and prepare materials for the interview process (candidate packs and panel packs)
- Manage candidate logistics on the day (reception, refreshments, directions)

STAGE 5 | PRE-APPOINTMENT VETTING CHECKS

Before confirming any appointment, the following checks must be completed in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Responsibility for ensuring these checks are completed should be assigned by the Governing Body to an appropriate School officer, typically the School Business Manager, School Administration Team or another nominated officer.

- **Enhanced DBS check (with barred list):** Required for all staff in regulated activity with children.
- **Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) prohibition check:** Checks whether the candidate is subject to a prohibition order or interim prohibition order.
- **Right to work in the UK:** Verification of the candidate's eligibility to work in the UK.
- **Verification of qualifications:** Original certificates must be seen and verified, particularly QTS where applicable.
- **Medical fitness:** Appropriate pre-employment health screening should be completed in accordance with employment and equality legislation, and reasonable adjustments considered where required.

- **Overseas checks:** Where a candidate has lived or worked outside the UK, additional checks may be required.
- **Single central record:** The successful candidate must be added to the school's single central record (SCR) before they start.

The School remains responsible for completion, verification and retention of recruitment checks and Single Central Record requirements.

STAGE 6 | RATIFICATION AND APPOINTMENT

Chair of Governors

- Chair the ratification meeting of the full governing body (normally held on the same day as the final interviews): the selection panel presents its recommendation and the governing body ratifies the appointment and the salary point within the agreed Individual School Range
- Where the LA is the employer (community, voluntary-controlled and community special schools): send the recommendation in writing to the Director of Education, copied to HR, including confirmation of salary and proposed start date, and seek the LA's agreement to the appointment
- If the governing body wishes to appoint a candidate to whom the LA has objected, the reasons for the decision must be stated in writing

BDSIP Adviser

- Attend the ratification meeting to answer questions about the process, the offer and the salary range

LBBD School's HR Adviser

- Attend the ratification meeting, where requested, to advise on employment or contractual matters.
- Provide advice on contractual and employment matters where required.

Notifying Candidates

- The School should arrange the issue of the offer letter, contract of employment and onboarding documentation through its normal employment processes.
- The successful candidate should be informed promptly and in writing
- Unsuccessful interview candidates should be notified promptly and offered feedback where requested.
- Where feedback is requested, it should be objective, evidence based and linked to the published assessment criteria and evidence gathered throughout the recruitment process.
- Update the school's record on Get Information About Schools (GIAS) with the new headteacher's details

- The School must ensure that all required pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed before the successful candidate commences duties.

Audit Trail and Record Keeping

A full audit trail should be maintained throughout the recruitment process, including applications, assessment materials, interview notes, scoring sheets, references, feedback records and appointment documentation.

Appointment decisions should be objective, evidence based and capable of withstanding audit, challenge and external scrutiny.

KEY REFERENCES AND GUIDANCE

- School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, DfE
- Recruiting a Headteacher (DfE, 2017, non-statutory guidance)
- NGA Executive Leader Recruitment Toolkit
- Staffing and Employment Guidance for Schools (DfE, September 2025)
- School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD)
- Headteachers' Standards (DfE)
- Equality Act 2010