



Safer Recruitment, Staff Suitability and Ongoing Monitoring

Purpose

Woodlands is committed to recruiting and retaining individuals who are suitable to work with children. Robust safer recruitment procedures help prevent unsuitable individuals from gaining access to children and contribute to creating a safe and secure environment.

Safeguarding considerations underpin every stage of the recruitment process.

Recruitment Principles

Woodlands will ensure that all recruitment decisions are:

- Fair, transparent and based on merit.
- Compliant with equality legislation.
- Focused on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Carried out by appropriately trained staff wherever possible.
- Fully documented.

All applicants will be informed that safeguarding checks form part of the recruitment process.

Pre-Employment Checks

Before any individual starts work (including apprentices and regular volunteers where required), Woodlands will complete appropriate pre-employment checks, which may include:

- Identity verification.
- Verification of the right to work in the UK.
- An enhanced DBS check, including a check of the children's barred list where appropriate.
- Verification of qualifications relevant to the role.
- A minimum of two satisfactory references, including the most recent employer where possible.
- Full employment history with explanations for any gaps.
- A health declaration to confirm the individual is medically fit to carry out the role.
- Overseas criminal record checks where applicable.
- Disqualification checks in line with EYFS requirements.

No individual will have unsupervised access to children until all required checks have been completed and deemed satisfactory.

DBS Checks

Woodlands requires all relevant staff to hold an appropriate Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate.

Where a DBS certificate reveals information, a risk assessment will be undertaken before any employment decision is made.

Staff are expected to inform the Manager immediately if:

- they are arrested or charged with an offence;
- they are convicted of an offence;
- they become subject to any safeguarding investigation; or
- any circumstance arises that may affect their suitability to work with children.

Failure to disclose relevant information may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Staff Suitability

Suitability is an ongoing responsibility and does not end after recruitment.

All staff are expected to:

- maintain high standards of professional conduct;
- comply with safeguarding policies and procedures;
- declare any changes that may affect their suitability to work with children;
- inform the Manager immediately of any relevant legal, professional or personal matters that could impact their role.

The Manager will take appropriate action where concerns arise regarding a person's continued suitability.

Induction

Every new member of staff, student and volunteer will receive a safeguarding induction before working unsupervised with children.

Induction will include:

- the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- the Staff Code of Conduct;
- whistleblowing procedures;
- safeguarding reporting procedures;
- identification of the DSL and Deputy DSL(s);
- emergency procedures;
- safer working practices;
- health and safety arrangements;
- child protection recording systems;
- confidentiality requirements.

Completion of induction will be documented.

Probationary Period

New employees will complete a probationary period during which their practice, conduct and suitability will be monitored.

Safeguarding practice forms a key part of probation reviews.

Concerns identified during probation will be addressed promptly and may result in additional support, an extension of probation or termination of employment where appropriate.

Ongoing Safeguarding Training

Safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff.

Woodlands will ensure that staff receive:

- safeguarding training during induction;
- regular safeguarding updates;
- annual safeguarding refresher training;
- Prevent Duty awareness training;
- online safety awareness;
- appropriate training relating to specific safeguarding risks;
- opportunities to discuss safeguarding practice during supervision.

The DSL and Deputy DSL(s) will undertake enhanced safeguarding training appropriate to their role and keep their knowledge up to date. Training records will be maintained and monitored.

Safeguarding Discussions

All staff will attend regular meetings.

This provides an opportunity to:

- discuss safeguarding concerns;
- review children's welfare;
- reflect on professional practice;
- identify training needs;
- promote staff wellbeing;
- reinforce safeguarding expectations.

Safeguarding discussions will be recorded where appropriate.

Low-Level Concerns

Woodlands encourages an open and transparent culture in which concerns about adult behaviour can be raised without fear.

A low-level concern is any behaviour that:

- is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct;
- may not meet the threshold for a formal allegation but causes concern; or
- has the potential to undermine professional boundaries.

Examples may include:

- inappropriate language;
- favouritism;
- excessive personal contact;
- inappropriate use of social media;
- failure to follow safeguarding procedures,
- lack of supervision or not maintaining ratios

All low-level concerns will be reported to the Manager, recorded, reviewed and addressed appropriately.

Repeated low-level concerns may indicate a wider safeguarding risk and will be considered collectively.

Whistleblowing

Woodlands is committed to maintaining a culture where staff feel confident to speak up about poor or unsafe practice.

Staff must report concerns where they believe:

- a child is at risk;
- safeguarding procedures are not being followed;
- a colleague's behaviour is inappropriate;
- safeguarding information is being concealed;
- unsafe practices continue despite being challenged.

Concerns may be raised with the Manager, the DSL, the Chair of Trustees or directly with external agencies where appropriate.

Staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith will be supported and will not suffer detriment as a result.

Allegations Against Staff

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff, volunteer, student, contractor or trustee has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against a child;
- behaved towards a child in a manner indicating they may pose a risk of harm; or

- behaved in a way that raises concerns about their suitability to work with children,

must be reported immediately to the Manager.

If the allegation concerns the Manager, it must be reported immediately to the Chair of Trustees.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be contacted without delay for advice before any internal investigation begins, unless immediate action is required to protect a child.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

Record Keeping

Woodlands will maintain confidential records relating to:

- recruitment checks;
- safeguarding training;
- supervision;
- suitability declarations;
- low-level concerns;
- whistleblowing concerns;
- allegations;
- disciplinary action where relevant.

Records will be stored securely, with access limited to authorised personnel, and retained in accordance with statutory requirements.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The Manager and Board of Trustees will regularly monitor recruitment and safeguarding practices to ensure they remain effective, legally compliant and aligned with current statutory guidance.

Learning from audits, incidents, complaints, inspections and safeguarding reviews will be used to strengthen practice and improve outcomes for children.