

# Unit 2: The recruitment process

## Headteacher vacancy: 2

### References

**KCSIE makes clear that references should be sought for shortlisted candidates and scrutinised prior to interview where possible; this allows any concerns to be clarified with the referee and / or discussed with the candidate at interview.**

Making sure that references are obtained on short-listed candidates at the right time, from the right people and asking for specific, relevant information, will play an important part in the selection process. This will help the organisation to ensure that it selects someone who is suitable to work with children and avoid taking on an unsuitable or dangerous person.

Schools and colleges should:

- have a reference from current or most recent employer
- Ensure any references are from the candidate's current employer and have been completed by a senior person with appropriate authority (if the referee is school or college based, the reference should be confirmed by the headteacher/principal as accurate in respect of any disciplinary investigations)
- if not currently working with children but has done so in the past, a reference should be sought from the most recent employer where the role involved working with children
- seek specific confirmation of the details and responsibilities of the previous post given by applicant
- always verify information with the person who provided the reference
- ensure that any references received electronically originate from a legitimate source;
- establish the reason for the candidate leaving their current or most recent post.

References are just as important for voluntary posts as for paid employment. A similar process should be followed when seeking volunteers for the kinds of posts that require a formal recruitment process. However, prospective volunteers might not be in paid employment or have previous experience of working with children. Consequently, schools may have to be prepared to be flexible about the kinds of people from whom they will accept references and the nature of those references. Nevertheless, it is important to make background enquiries and checks on volunteers as well as on paid staff.

### Scrutinising references

It is very important to read references carefully and thoroughly to make sure that:

- The referee has answered all the questions
- There are no vague or ambiguous statements

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It is also vital to compare the information about the applicant provided by the referee with the information the applicant has given about him or herself and his or her experience and background.

### **'Keeping children safe in education' says schools and colleges should:**

- not accept open references e.g. to whom it may concern
- not rely on applicants to obtain their reference
- ensure any references are from the candidate's current employer and have been completed by a senior person with appropriate authority (if the referee is school or college based, the reference should be confirmed by the headteacher/principal as accurate in respect of any disciplinary investigations)
- secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the applicant worked with children (if not currently working with children), if the applicant has never worked with children, then ensure a reference from their current employer
- always verify any information with the person who provided the reference
- obtain verification of the individual's most recent relevant period of employment where the applicant is not currently employed
- ensure electronic references originate from a legitimate source
- contact referees to clarify content where information is vague or insufficient information is provided
- compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any discrepancies with the candidate
- establish the reason for the candidate leaving their current or most recent post
- ensure any concerns are resolved satisfactorily before appointment is confirmed