Recruitment and Safer Recruitment Statement

At School Food Matters, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. We follow safer recruitment practices to ensure that all individuals appointed to our team are suitable, safe, and able to uphold our values.

Recruitment Policy

School Food Matters is committed to attracting, recruiting, and retaining talented individuals who share our values and can contribute to our mission. We aim to ensure that all recruitment decisions are fair, transparent, consistent, and based on merit.

Our recruitment practices are designed to:

- recruit the best person for each role through an open and competitive process
- ensure all applicants are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect
- promote equality, diversity, and inclusion and provide equal opportunities regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation
- select candidates on objective criteria on the basis of their skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications, and suitability for the role
- ensure compliance with employment legislation and best practice guidance including the Equality Act 2010, UK GDPR, and safer recruitment guidance
- maintain confidentiality and handle candidate information in accordance with UK data protection requirements
- provide reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process where required
- support positive candidate experiences and uphold the reputation of School Food Matters as an employer

Records of recruitment decisions are retained in accordance with our data retention and privacy policies.

Fixed-term employees

School Food Matters values the skills and experience of its employees and seeks to retain talented individuals. When appropriate vacancies arise within the organisation, employees on fixed-term contracts will be alerted and encouraged to apply first. Provided the fixed-term employee meets the essential requirements of the new role, their application will be taken forward and a wider recruitment process will not be required.

In accordance with the Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002, fixed-term employees will not be treated less favourably than comparable permanent

employees. All appointments will be made through a fair and objective process, based on the skills, experience, and suitability of the candidate.

Stages of our recruitment process

Our safer recruitment process may vary depending on the role, but typically includes:

1. **Advert**
   Each vacancy is advertised clearly, outlining responsibilities, required skills, and our commitment to safeguarding.
2. **Application**
   Applicants complete an official application form to ensure consistent collection of information
3. **Shortlisting**
   Applications are assessed against pre-agreed criteria to ensure fairness and consistency. All names and education establishments are removed from the application
4. **Social media search**
   Prior to interview, all interview candidates are subject to a social media search which will be conducted by our Head of HR
5. **Interview**
   Shortlisted candidates attend a structured interview, which may also include a task
6. **Offer of Employment**
   A conditional offer is made subject to the checks below being complete and deemed satisfactory
7. **Identity and Right to Work Checks**
   We verify identity and eligibility to work in the UK before appointing any candidate
8. **References**
   We request a minimum of two references, including the most recent employer
9. **Employment History Verification**
   We review employment history, investigate any gaps, and ensure previous roles are accurately represented. Additional checks may be required.
10. **DBS Check (where applicable)**
    For regulated roles, we carry out the appropriate level of **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** check prior to commencement of contract. Employment is always subject to satisfactory results. For candidates that have lived abroad, checks will be made in any country where you have lived for 12 months or more (whether continuously or in total) in the last 10 years, while aged 18 or over. DBS checks are renewed every three years.

Recruitment of freelancers and volunteers

We apply the same safer recruitment principles to freelancers and volunteers as we do to paid staff. This may include:

- application and interview
- identity verification
- reference checks
- DBS checks (renewed every three years)
- training and induction prior to starting

No freelancer or volunteer will begin work with School Food Matters until all relevant checks are completed.

How we handle recruitment complaints

We aim to treat all applicants fairly and respectfully. If an individual feels they have been treated incorrectly or unfairly throughout the recruitment process, they may submit a complaint.

Our recruitment complaints process includes:

- acknowledgment of the complaint
- a clear and timely investigation
- a written response outlining findings
- steps taken to improve processes where required

Feedback from applicants is valued and helps us continue to strengthen our recruitment practice.

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To be reviewed annually