



ARK Safer Recruitment Policy-September 2026

September 2026

ARK Alternative Education Provision (ARK AEP)

Website: www.arkaep.co.uk

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out how ARK Alternative Education Provision (ARK AEP) recruits staff, volunteers, agency workers, contractors and anyone working with or on behalf of learners safely, fairly and effectively. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is central to every stage of recruitment and selection.

This policy applies to all recruitment activity for paid employees, volunteers, supply and agency staff, contractors, consultants, governors/trustees where applicable, visiting professionals and any other adults who may work directly with learners or have access to learner information or premises.

2. Commitment to Safeguarding

ARK AEP is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and representatives to share this commitment. Safer recruitment is part of ARK AEP's wider safeguarding culture and is embedded before, during and after appointment.

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, staff are expected to understand their safeguarding responsibilities, read Part One of the statutory guidance in full, and follow ARK AEP's child protection, low-level concerns, whistleblowing, online safety and staff behaviour/code of conduct procedures.

3. ARK Values in Recruitment

- **Aspiration:** recruiting people who inspire learners to aim high, develop confidence and achieve positive outcomes.
- **Resilience:** valuing candidates who demonstrate perseverance, adaptability, professional curiosity and the ability to work constructively in a specialist alternative provision setting.
- **Kindness:** prioritising adults who model respect, empathy, inclusion and trauma-informed practice.

4. Legal and Statutory Framework

ARK AEP will comply with all relevant safeguarding, employment, equality and data protection requirements, including but not limited to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Education Act 2002, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Childcare Act 2006 where applicable, the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

KCSIE 2026 comes into force from 1 September 2026. Until that date, ARK AEP will continue to follow the version of KCSIE in force at the relevant time and will update operational practice as statutory guidance changes.

5. Recruitment Procedures

5.1 Planning and Advertising

- All roles will have an up-to-date job description and person specification that clearly identify safeguarding responsibilities.
- Vacancy information will include ARK AEP's commitment to safeguarding, safer recruitment, equality and suitability checks.
- Advertisements will make clear that shortlisted candidates may be subject to online checks as part of due diligence.

- Applications will only be accepted through formal recruitment channels; CVs alone will not be accepted.

5.2 Application and Shortlisting

- Applicants must complete ARK AEP's application process in full, including employment history, education and qualifications, relevant experience, referee details and a declaration relating to criminal convictions and suitability to work with children.
- At least two appropriately trained people will shortlist applications against the person specification.
- Employment gaps, repeated changes of employment, anomalies, discrepancies or incomplete information will be explored and recorded.
- Shortlisted candidates will be informed that online searches may be undertaken to identify any publicly available information relevant to safeguarding, suitability or professional conduct.

5.3 Interviewing and Selection

- Interviews will be planned, structured and conducted by a panel that includes at least one person trained in safer recruitment where possible.
- Questions will assess safeguarding awareness, professional boundaries, child-centred practice, behaviour management, inclusion, online safety and alignment with ARK values.
- Any concerns, gaps, discrepancies or safeguarding issues arising from the application, references or online checks will be discussed with the candidate and recorded.
- Original identity documents, right to work evidence, qualification certificates and professional registration evidence will be verified before appointment.

6. Pre-Employment and Suitability Checks

No person will begin work at ARK AEP until all required pre-appointment checks have been completed and recorded, unless a formal risk assessment has been authorised in exceptional circumstances and only where legally permissible.

- Verification of identity, including photographic identification.

- Enhanced DBS check, including children's barred list information where the role is regulated activity.
- Right to work in the UK check.
- Verification of professional qualifications, training and registrations relevant to the role.
- Teacher prohibition, direction, sanction or restriction checks where applicable, using the appropriate DfE service.
- Section 128 direction checks for relevant management positions where applicable.
- Overseas checks where the candidate has lived or worked outside the UK.
- At least two written references, including the most recent employer, with specific safeguarding questions and follow-up where information is unclear or incomplete.
- Medical fitness declaration to confirm the candidate's ability to carry out the role, with reasonable adjustments considered where appropriate.
- Online due diligence checks for shortlisted candidates, limited to information relevant to safeguarding and suitability.

7. Regulated Activity, Volunteers and Work Experience

ARK AEP will determine whether each role involves regulated activity with children and will apply the appropriate level of vetting. KCSIE 2026 clarifies regulated activity and volunteer arrangements, including changes to supervision exemptions. ARK AEP will not rely on informal supervision arrangements to reduce safeguarding checks where the role meets the regulated activity criteria.

Volunteers, visitors and adults supervising learners on work experience will be assessed according to the frequency, nature and level of contact with learners. Appropriate checks, supervision, induction and safeguarding agreements will be completed before activity begins.

8. Agency Staff, Contractors and Third Parties

Where ARK AEP uses agency staff, supply staff, contractors or commissioned providers, written confirmation will be obtained that all required safer

recruitment checks have been completed. Identity will be verified on arrival, and safeguarding expectations will be explained before work begins.

For alternative provision, placements, off-site activity or services delivered by third parties, ARK AEP will ensure safeguarding arrangements are clear, proportionate and documented. ARK AEP remains responsible for ensuring learners are safeguarded when it arranges education or support through another provider.

9. Single Central Record and Recruitment Records

ARK AEP will maintain a Single Central Record in line with statutory requirements. The record will show the checks undertaken, the date each check was completed, who completed the check and any relevant certificate or reference number where appropriate.

- Application forms and recruitment correspondence.
- Shortlisting records, interview notes and assessment decisions.
- Identity, right to work and qualification verification records.
- DBS certificate number, date of issue and barred list status where required.
- Reference requests, responses and follow-up notes.
- Risk assessments, where exceptional circumstances require them.
- Signed contracts, declarations and safeguarding agreements.

10. Induction and Training

All new staff, volunteers and relevant adults will receive safeguarding induction before or as soon as practicable after starting work. Induction will include child protection procedures, the staff behaviour/code of conduct, whistleblowing, low-level concerns, online safety, filtering and monitoring responsibilities, equality and diversity, attendance and absence concerns, information sharing, ARK values and role-specific expectations.

Staff will receive regular safeguarding updates and annual training in line with local safeguarding partnership expectations and statutory guidance. Training will reflect emerging safeguarding themes, including online harms, artificial intelligence, child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, mental health,

young carers, children with medical conditions, SEND and children who may be at greater risk of harm.

11. Ongoing Safeguarding, Concerns and Duty to Refer

Safer recruitment does not end at appointment. ARK AEP will maintain a culture of vigilance in which concerns about staff, volunteers, agency workers, contractors or other adults are reported and managed promptly. This includes allegations that may meet the harm threshold and low-level concerns that do not meet the threshold but may indicate a pattern of behaviour or breach of professional boundaries.

Where a person is dismissed, removed from regulated activity, would have been dismissed had they not resigned, or otherwise meets the relevant criteria, ARK AEP will make referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service and other professional or regulatory bodies as required.

12. Equal Opportunities and Fair Recruitment

ARK AEP promotes equality, diversity and inclusion. Recruitment decisions will be based on merit, suitability, safeguarding requirements and the needs of learners. No applicant will be treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic. Reasonable adjustments will be made for candidates with disabilities where appropriate.

13. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Recruitment information will be processed fairly, lawfully and securely. Records will only be accessed by authorised staff and retained in line with ARK AEP's retention schedule, data protection duties and safeguarding responsibilities.

14. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and whenever there are significant legislative, statutory guidance or organisational changes. Recruitment practice, safer recruitment training, Single Central Record arrangements and safeguarding compliance will be monitored by senior leaders and reported to governors/trustees or the appropriate oversight body.

Created by: Kay Walton

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