

Policy on Vetting and Use of Volunteers Policy

This Policy has been broken into two sections. Section (A) Policy on Vetting and Criminal Checks. Section (B)

It is the policy of our school that all adults who come into contact with pupils either in a paid or voluntary capacity are safe and suitable persons to work with children. To this end we use Access NI to carry out background checks and seek references for all adults who work regularly in our school.

Paid Staff

Pre-Employment vetting checks remain a key preventative measure in denying an unsuitable individual access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system.

Pre-Employment Vetting

Paid Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff:

It remains DE's policy that all new paid teaching and non-teaching staff, being appointed to posts in schools, must undergo a pre-employment vetting check before taking up their post. The process for doing so, through Access NI remains unchanged.

Under the new Disclosure and Barring Arrangements, teachers and non-teaching staff are regarded as undertaking unsupervised Regulated Activities in a specific place such as a school. Consequently, the type of staff listed below, continue to require a vetting check to be carried out before they are employed in a school.

Full and part-time teachers; and Non-teaching staff such as:

- School class-room assistants
- School office staff
- School caretakers
- School catering staff

Pre-employment vetting checks should therefore continue to be carried out as part of the recruitment process for those staff being offered a post in a school and application to AccessNI should continue to be made through our relevant AccessNI Registered Body as before. Enhanced Disclosure Certificates (EDCs) issued by AccessNI are valid for each recruitment process that an individual undertakes.

DE does not fund the cost of vetting checks for paid employees working in/for schools. Paid employees are expected to pay the charge for an EDC.

Previous Employment in the Education Sector

Due to the unique features of the education sector, where staff move between schools, the academic year and its vacation periods (in particular the extended summer break), a school may be in a position where it recruits a paid member of staff who had previously worked at another school until the end of the preceding term. In such circumstances schools should obtain advice from their Employing Authority as to the vetting requirements for these individuals.

Depending on an individual's circumstances and employment history a new vetting check may not be required for paid teaching and non-teaching staff, if their previous employment history within the education sector can be verified, their break in employment in the education sector is not longer than three months and it can be confirmed that a vetting check was in place before they finished working at their previous school.

The safeguarding of pupils is paramount and if we are in any doubt about whether to vet a new member of paid staff, we should always err on the side of caution and obtain a new EDC.

Substitute Teachers

Teachers employed from the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register (NISTR) are normally vetted every 2 years as part of their registration with NISTR. By engaging the service of substitute teachers from the NISTR should therefore expect that they have been appropriately vetted by virtue of being on the Register. It is our Policy that only substitute teachers from NISTR will be employed.

Emergency cover for Non-Teaching Staff

In addition, situations will arise unexpectedly, where non-teaching staff are required to cover for permanent staff in the case of an emergency. It may be necessary that, in these circumstances, temporary arrangements have to be quickly put in place for such staff before a vetting check can be carried out. In situations where it is not possible to obtain a vetting check in advance, principals must carry out a risk assessment and in such circumstances all necessary steps should be taken to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people.

Temporary Staff

The school only uses temporary staff known to the school and who have been vetted and approved for working with children if they are working unsupervised.

Coaches/Tutors/Extended School staff – See Section (B)

Visitors to the School

Visitors to schools to attend meetings or events such as parents or to deliver goods or carry out maintenance tasks do not routinely need to be vetted before being allowed onto school premises. However, such visitors should be managed by school staff and their access to areas and movement within the school should be restricted as needs require. They should be (as required)

- Met/directed by school staff

- Signed in and out of the school by school staff
- If appropriate, be given restricted access to only specific areas of the school
- Where possible they should be escorted around the school premises by a member of staff
- If left unattended, they should be clearly identified with visitor/contractor passes; their access to pupils restricted to the purpose of their visit, and
- If delivering goods or carrying out building, maintenance or repair tasks, their work area should be cordoned off from pupils for health and safety reasons.

Pupils on Work Experience

DE does not require pupils who are on work experience/shadowing placement (eg. for a week) in a social care/health setting to have an Access NI check carried out. This is on the basis that pupils on such placements are neither qualified nor experienced to undertake any duties which would constitute Regulated Activity and should not be left unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults.

However, social care and health settings may require an EDC, in which case schools should ensure that their pupils' EDC are applied for through their Access NI Registered Body in advance of the placement. DE currently funds the cost of EDCs for these pupils. Schools/pupils should check if an EDC is required with the placement provider when arranging the placement.

Pupils on a long-term placement as part of a vocational course

However, pupils undertaking a regular placement, as part of a vocational course, over the duration of a term or an academic year in a social care/health setting, are required to have an EDC. This is because the pupil is likely to be engaged in Regulated Activity due to the regular nature of the placement and the likelihood that the pupil will, over the longer period of time, with experience, be asked to undertake some duties that would constitute Regulated Activity and is more likely than not to be unsupervised. DE also funds the EDCs for these pupils.

However, EDCs required for voluntary placements, arranged privately outside of the curriculum, are not funded by the Department.

Retention and recording of Vetting Checks

Access NI's Code of Practice advises employers not to retain EDCs or record any disclosure information contained within them for longer than is required for the purpose they were sought. In general, this should be no longer than 6 months after the date on which recruitment or other relevant decisions have been taken or after the date on which any dispute has been resolved. This period should only be exceeded in very exceptional circumstances which justify retention for a longer period.

DE recommends that for each member of staff, schools should keep a note of:

- The date of EDC application is sent to their Employing Authority/DE for processing

- The date the EDC is received from Access NI; and
- The EDC reference number

In the event of the school being asked for evidence that a member of the staff has been appropriately vetted, the school can use the record of the date and EDC reference number to confirm when a vetting check was obtained.

Other safeguarding measures

Schools are reminded that while re-employment vetting is of critical importance, it is only one of a number of measures that schools can use to help safeguard pupils in their care. Advice, guidance and training about appropriate behaviour, escorts around schools, clear identification of visitors in schools, a named person to report concerns or incidents to and observable working areas, where possible, all contribute to making safer working environments for both pupils, staff and visitors.

Where we enter into private voluntary arrangements with a parent providing coaching for example, the guidance for volunteers in DE Circular 2012/19 will apply in this situation

Section B -Volunteers

The Governing Body welcomes volunteers from the local community who are able to make a positive contribution to Queen Elizabeth II Primary School by giving freely of their time and talents to enhance learning experiences and outcomes for pupils.

Who is a Volunteer?

There are two types of volunteers working in schools:

- Those who work unsupervised
and
- Those who work under supervision

If a volunteer works unsupervised in a “Regulated Activity” – see list below, then they need to be vetted through an EDC from Access NI – make sure to complete Boxes H7 and H8 appropriately.

Definition of Regulated Activity

Under the new DBA the scope of Regulated Activity will include unsupervised activities including:

- Teaching
- Training
- Instructing
- Caring for or supervising children
- Providing advice/guidance on well-being
- Driving a vehicle only for children

and

- Regulated Activity is defined as unsupervised activity in a limited range of establishments (specified Places), with the opportunity for contact with children, such as schools and childcare premises including pre-school establishments
- In addition, in order to be regarded as Regulated Activity such unsupervised activity performed at such a specified place must be done regularly. Regularly means carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often), or on four or more days in a 30-day period (or in some cases, overnight)
- Regulated Activity still excludes family arrangements and personal non-commercial arrangements

3. Activities that are no longer regarded as Regulated Activity under the new DBA include:

- Activities performed by volunteers that are supervised at a reasonable day to day level, and
- Occasional or temporary services such as maintenance or repairs

Volunteers who work unsupervised

Volunteers who are not supervised are still regarded as working in Regulated Activity and therefore an EDC from AccessNI is still required. You must ensure that you apply to AccessNI for the appropriate check which includes a check of the barred lists. AccessNI guidance as to how to complete an application form is available at www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni. In addition, the AccessNI Helpline is available for advice on how to complete the application form:03002007888

Volunteers who work under supervision

If a volunteer is supervised, then under the new DBA they are not regarded as working in Regulated Activity and therefore a school is not required to obtain an EDC. However, a school is still entitled to obtain an EDC if it so wishes but it will be unlawful for a school to seek a barred list check in these circumstances. You must ensure that you apply to AccessNI for the appropriate type of check which would not include a check of the barred lists.

Funding of checks for volunteers

DE will continue to fund the costs of EDCs for Volunteers. Employing authorities and schools will be notified in advance of any changes to this policy.