

Remote interview guidance for schools

During this unprecedented time, it is anticipated that the Covid-19 pandemic, may unfortunately, result in some delay to the recruitment processes. Due to the restrictions in place the normal face to face interviews may not take place.

A number of schools in Leicester have successfully completed remote recruitment processes for new staff. This guidance is intended to support schools as an extension to the usual recruitment steps in maintaining the legal requirements whilst sharing the good practice that has been developed.

Allow additional time for the process

- This is a precautionary measure in case panel members become unwell or there are unforeseen problems.
- Ensure that the relevant panel members have access to the electronic documents and keep an up to date electronic checklist of what steps have been completed or require action.
- Regulations only require one member of the panel to have been trained in safer recruitment, but it is always good practice to have more than one where possible. If time allows, arrange for other panel members to undertake the training in case someone pulls out on the day.
- Online training for safer recruitment is available through a number of organisations. The Lucy Faithfull foundation is a national charity that provides training itself and endorses the work of other companies. Further information on training available can be found on their [website](#) or you can contact their training co-ordinator on: training@lucyfaithfull.org.uk

The NSPCC also provides safer recruitment training:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training/schools/safer-recruitment-in-education-training/>

Communication throughout the process

- Share the checklist with **panel members** to ensure they are clear on what the recruitment process will look like, who'll carry out each step and who'll be involved at each point.
- ETeach have posted some useful advice to **candidates** in order to prepare for a remote interview. You may wish to draw their attention to this: [ETeach Skype interview tips](#)
- Let **candidates** know exactly what the entire process will look like - how many stages there will be, how they will be assessed and a rough timescale. This will help to reassure them.

Amend recruitment policies

Decide what you need to adapt in your recruitment process and review any relevant policies.

Make sure you update your policies to reflect the changes - e.g. your safer recruitment policy and recruitment policy.

Governing bodies have been provided with advice on how to carry out virtual meetings or email for 'essential' items of business. Any revisions to relevant policies can be dealt with easily through either method.

Potential interview solutions

1. Additional phone interview to screen candidates

Treat this as part of the formal stage of the recruitment process - ask each candidate the same questions.

Use this extra step to help build a relationship with candidates, to compensate for not meeting them in person, and use the opportunity to sell your school. Make a note of the key aspects you want candidates to go away with and be sure to get those across.

Be clear on what you want to learn about candidates, set 5 or 6 questions and keep to an agreed time limit of 20 – 30 minutes.

2. Interview tasks

Decide whether you want candidates to complete tasks before, during or after the interview and make sure this is clear to them ahead of time - including how long they will have to complete the task and how to submit it.

For tasks such as presentations, ask candidates to send a video of themselves delivering the task so that you can review them in your own time and not over video conference.

Below is an example from a local school:

“We took the interviews over two mornings to ensure social distancing. Candidates did not have anything to prepare before the day but needed to bring a laptop (and obviously their DBS identification so we could copy it in case they were appointed).

We had four activities, a short novel/picture book to devise a lesson in 1.5hrs followed by sharing it with myself and the deputy as if we were part of their year team. It was a good to see how creative they were and the consideration they gave to abilities, engagement, deepening thinking, expectation and understanding of how learning builds on previous learning. As well as their communication skills.”

Others have used a similar approach but online.

Nationally, where the candidate was willing to share videos of their teaching, this was taken as part of their general development. Please note that all candidates should have the same experience at interview. You should be consistent across the whole group being interviewed.

If you are conducting remote interviews it is strongly suggested that you contact your HR provider for advice.

3. Remote interviews

It is important to ensure that the technology is working and you have the right space to conduct the interviews. Consider whether the room is quiet, unlikely to have any interruptions, has sufficient light and the camera/microphone are working.

If you have panel members who are less confident about interviewing in this way test it out. It will also iron out any potential IT problems.

You may wish to organise a trial run conversation with candidates for the same reasons. This conversation will also help to build a relationship with the candidates and allow you to talk through any reasonable adjustments for the interview itself. Let them know how the interview will run.

Etiquette during the interview - for panel members

- Make sure the panel is appropriately dressed
- Give candidates your full attention
- Nominate a chair to manage the interview process and invite panel members to speak - agree beforehand who'll ask what questions
- Use physical cues - like putting your hand up. E.g. during discussions so the candidate knows who is about to speak
- Keep microphones on mute unless you are talking

Prepare interview questions as you normally would

- Give candidates extra time to answer questions. If you are able, type key words into the chat function of the software. This could be for clarity or as a reasonable adjustment for candidates with additional needs
- Include additional safeguarding questions if you wish
- Start and end the interview in the usual way

4. Alternative to lesson observations

If your school is currently delivering remote lessons, ask candidates to deliver one remotely.

Otherwise, review the evidence you're normally looking for when observing a lesson and use this to set specific interview questions. For example, ask:

- How do you try to establish appropriate relationships with pupils?
- How do you make sure your lessons are:
 - Engaging for the class?
 - Differentiated to support children of all abilities?

Is it possible to meet a group of pupils remotely? For example, those on the student council. Have someone from the panel online to observe and record it so you have something to refer to.

If you have not been able to observe teaching practice you can discuss this during the formal interview and make reference of the need for an initial assessment in the offer letter.

Referees

Follow your usual practice for requesting references but allow additional time. It may be helpful for candidates to provide alternative contact details where possible.

- If a referee does not respond to your request, ask the candidate to pursue on your behalf. If there is still no response, ask for the name of another referee.
- You may wish to amend your reference request letter slightly to seek more detail on teaching practice if you are not able to make a full assessment.

Senior positions

If you are recruiting for a senior position, it is likely that you will want candidates to meet staff.

Organise a timetable and send it to candidates and your staff:

- Use a single video-conference link that candidates can stay on
- Have specific times for members of staff or groups to log in and meet candidates

As you normally would, ask members of staff to feed back on their impression of the candidates.

NQT's

The expectation is that universities, colleges and SCITTs will be following similar assessment procedures to schools meaning there will still be NQTs in the market for jobs.

Check ID documents remotely

Due to the current situation you may not be able to see ID documents face to face. Scanned images or video link are acceptable as an interim measure, but the original documents should be brought into school as soon as it is possible to do so. It would be good practice to include this request in your offer letter.

All other pre-employment checks should remain in place.

As of 30 March 2020 the following temporary changes have been made:

- checks can now be carried out over video calls
- job applicants and existing workers can send scanned documents or a photo of documents for checks using email or a mobile app, rather than sending originals
- employers should use the [Employer Checking Service](#) if a prospective or existing employee cannot provide any of the accepted documents

Please access the gov.uk [COVID-19 right to work checks](#) for further information and advice regarding the temporary adjustments.

Offer letter

If you have made alterations to your usual recruitment practice it would be advisable to note this in the offer letter.

For new teaching posts an additional paragraph has been prepared for the offer letter. This is to take into account the lack of observation of teaching practice. The paragraph is shown below:

I Would also like to remind you of our conversation at the time the offer of appointment was made. As we were unable to complete all of our normal recruitment processes it will be necessary to make an initial assessment of your classroom practice through observation and discussion to ensure that both parties are clear about the norm for the school. It will also allow you the opportunity to ask any questions too. Should you/we consider there are any training needs these can be identified, and support put in place.