

Title	Safer Recruitment Policy
Cross References	External: • Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 – Part Three • Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 • Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and Exceptions Order • Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 • Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR Internal: •  Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy •  Staff Code of Conduct •  Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy •  Online Safety Policy •  Staff Induction and Training Procedure •  Whistle Blowing Policy
Date	October 2026

1. Policy Statement

Apricot Online Ltd is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Safer recruitment is a core safeguarding control and applies from the first design of a role through advertising, selection, pre-employment checks, appointment, induction and ongoing vigilance.

Apricot is an online alternative education provider. Recruitment decisions must therefore consider not only competence to teach or perform the role, but also suitability to work remotely with children, professional boundaries, safe use of technology, communication style and the ability to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns in an online environment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to employees, teachers, relevant contractors, volunteers and other workers engaged by Apricot Online. The checks required will reflect the nature of the role, whether it is regulated activity and the applicable legal and statutory requirements.

3. Responsibilities

The Operations Director has operational responsibility for safer recruitment and for ensuring appropriate policies, procedures and records are maintained. At least one person involved in recruitment should have appropriate safer recruitment knowledge/training. All people participating in recruitment must act consistently, fairly and with safeguarding at the centre of decision-making.

4. Recruitment Principles

- Deter unsuitable applicants through clear safeguarding messages and robust role information.
- Reject unsuitable applicants through structured shortlisting, interview and scrutiny of employment history, motivation and suitability.
- Prevent unsuitable appointments through appropriate pre-employment checks and verification.
- Maintain ongoing vigilance through induction, supervision, safeguarding training, professional conduct expectations and reporting routes.
- Promote equality of opportunity and make recruitment decisions on relevant, lawful and evidence-based criteria.

5. Advertising and Applicant Information

- Job information will explain Apricot's commitment to safeguarding and that appropriate safeguarding checks will be undertaken.
- Role descriptions/person specifications will identify safeguarding responsibilities and whether the role involves regulated activity with children.
- Where applicable, applicants will be told that the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 subject to the rules on protected convictions and cautions.
- Applicants must provide a complete employment history and explain gaps or inconsistencies.
- Applicants must confirm that information provided is true and disclose relevant information required for the role.

6. Shortlisting and Online Due Diligence

Shortlisting will normally be undertaken by at least two people. Gaps, inconsistencies and potential safeguarding concerns will be identified for exploration at interview.

In line with KCSIE 2026, Apricot will consider an online search of shortlisted candidates as part of due diligence. Candidates will be informed that such searches may be undertaken. Searches will focus on publicly available information relevant to suitability to work with children and will be conducted proportionately and consistently.

7. References

- References will normally be sought before interview where possible.
- Apricot will not accept open references such as 'to whom it may concern'.
- References must be obtained directly from the referee and not relied upon where supplied by the applicant.
- A reference should be obtained from the current or most recent employer and from a person with appropriate authority.
- References will seek factual information and specific confirmation of suitability to work with children, safeguarding concerns and relevant disciplinary matters in accordance with current guidance.
- Any discrepancy between a reference and the application will be explored before appointment.
- Where a candidate has not previously worked with children, references will still be used to assess reliability, conduct and suitability for the role.

8. Interview and Selection

- Interview questions will explore motivation for the role, safeguarding understanding, professional boundaries and suitability to work with children online.
- The panel will explore gaps, frequent changes of employment, discrepancies and concerns identified during shortlisting or references.
- Candidates may be asked scenario-based safeguarding questions relevant to remote teaching and communication.
- Selection decisions and reasons will be recorded.

9. Pre-Employment Checks

Before an individual starts regulated or relevant work, Apricot will complete and record all checks required for the role. These may include:

- verification of identity;
- right to work in the UK;
- an appropriate enhanced DBS check, including children's barred list information where the role is eligible and requires it;
- verification of professional qualifications where required;
- prohibition from teaching check for teaching work where applicable;
- section 128 direction check where applicable to the role;
- checks relating to overseas residence/work where appropriate;
- satisfactory references;
- employment history and gap scrutiny;
- relevant self-declaration and suitability information;
- health/fitness considerations only to the extent lawfully required after an offer, where applicable.

No single check replaces professional judgement. A DBS certificate is one part of the wider safer recruitment process.

10. DBS Checks and Update Service

DBS checks will be undertaken at the level legally appropriate and eligible for the role. Apricot will follow current DBS identity and certificate-checking requirements. Where an individual is subscribed to the DBS Update Service and the certificate is appropriate for the workforce and level of check required, Apricot may carry out a status check with the individual's consent.

Apricot will not rely on a blanket rule that an older DBS certificate remains valid for a fixed number of years. Decisions about whether a new check is required will follow current legal eligibility, KCSIE/DBS guidance, the nature of the role and the evidence available.

11. Criminal Records and Fair Assessment

Having a criminal record will not automatically prevent appointment. Relevant information will be considered fairly, confidentially and proportionately, taking account of the nature and seriousness of the matter, relevance to the role, time elapsed, circumstances, pattern of behaviour, evidence of rehabilitation and safeguarding risk. Protected convictions and cautions will be handled in accordance with the law.

12. Overseas Checks

Where a candidate has lived or worked outside the UK, Apricot will consider what additional checks are appropriate so that, as far as reasonably possible, relevant events occurring outside the UK can be considered. The absence of an overseas certificate will not be treated as proof of suitability; a risk-based decision will be recorded.

13. Contractors, Freelancers and Agency Workers

Apricot will obtain appropriate written assurance and/or undertake checks according to the worker's engagement model and role. The organisation will not assume that another organisation's checks are sufficient without appropriate confirmation. Identity will be verified before work begins and any role-specific safeguarding requirements will be confirmed.

14. Single Central Record

Apricot will maintain an up-to-date Single Central Record (SCR) of the required recruitment and vetting checks for relevant staff. The SCR will be maintained accurately, reviewed periodically and supported by underlying evidence where required.

15. Conditional Offers and Starting Work

Offers may be conditional on satisfactory completion of required checks. Individuals must not begin unsupervised regulated activity until required checks are complete unless a lawful, documented and appropriately risk-assessed exception applies. Any such decision must be authorised by senior leadership and reviewed until outstanding checks are resolved.

16. Induction and Ongoing Vigilance

Safer recruitment does not end at appointment. New staff must complete Apricot's Staff Induction and Training Procedure before being signed off for independent teaching or duties. Safeguarding training, the Staff Code of Conduct, online professional boundaries, low-level concerns, whistleblowing and reporting routes form part of ongoing safeguarding assurance.

17. Existing Staff and Changes in Circumstances

Staff must notify Apricot promptly of relevant changes that may affect their suitability to work with children, in accordance with contractual and safeguarding requirements. Apricot may undertake further checks or risk assessment where information arises during employment.

18. Record Keeping and Data Protection

Recruitment records will be retained securely and only for legitimate recruitment, safeguarding, employment and legal purposes. Access will be restricted to authorised people and personal information will be handled in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if statutory guidance, DBS requirements, legislation or Apricot recruitment arrangements change.

Appendix 1 - Safer Recruitment Checklist

- Safeguarding statement included in advert/role information.
- Application and complete employment history received.
- Shortlisting by at least two people where practicable.
- Gaps/inconsistencies identified.
- Shortlisted candidate informed of possible online search.
- Online due diligence considered/completed and relevant issues recorded.
- References obtained directly and scrutinised.
- Safeguarding suitability explored at interview.
- Identity and right to work verified.
- DBS/barred list check completed as required.
- Teaching prohibition/section 128/overseas checks completed where applicable.
- Qualifications verified where required.
- SCR updated.
- Conditional offer requirements satisfied.
- Induction and safeguarding training arranged before independent duties.

Authorised by: Jodie Phillips, Operations Director

Date: October 2026

Review Date: October 2027