

Little Acorns Montessori

Safer Recruitment Policy

Ascot | Bracknell | Crowthorne

1. Document Control

Document Control	
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2. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in our care. We believe that every child has the right to be protected from harm, and we recognise that a safer recruitment process is one of the most important preventative measures an early years setting can take.

We are committed to ensuring that all staff, volunteers, students on placement, and any other individuals who work regularly with children at Little Acorns Montessori are suitable, qualified, and safe to do so. This policy applies across all our settings in Ascot, Bracknell, and Crowthorne.

This policy is mandatory. It must be read by all those involved in any recruitment activity. Failure to comply with these procedures is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action.

3. Statutory and Regulatory Framework

3.1 Statutory Obligations

This policy fulfils the requirements of the following legislation and statutory guidance:

Primary Legislation

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Childcare Act 2006
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (and Exceptions Order 1975, as amended)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2025 — for context and best practice, not applicable in Early Years.

Statutory Guidance

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework, DfE 2025 (effective 1 September 2025) — Section 3 (Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements), paragraphs 3.3, 3.13–3.17
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (HM Government)
- Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) procedures and guidance

3.2 Key EYFS 2025 Requirements This Policy Addresses

The EYFS 2025 (Section 3) requires that:

- Providers take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well (paragraph 3.3).
- Providers ensure that people looking after children are suitable and hold relevant qualifications, training, and have passed required checks (paragraph 3.13).
- Providers record information about staff qualifications, identity checks, vetting processes, and references, including the DBS check reference number, date obtained, and who obtained it (paragraph 3.14).
- References are obtained before a new staff member commences employment (paragraph 3.15, EYFS 2025).
- References must come from the applicant's current employer, training provider, or education setting, and must be completed by a senior person with appropriate authority (paragraph 3.15, EYFS 2025).
- An enhanced DBS check, including a Children's Barred List check where the role involves regulated activity, is obtained for all staff (paragraphs 3.13–3.16).
- An additional criminal records check is made for anyone who has lived or worked abroad (paragraph 3.16).
- This safeguarding policy includes procedures to help ensure that only suitable individuals are recruited (EYFS 2025 requirement).

4. Scope

This policy applies to the recruitment of all individuals working or volunteering at Little Acorns Montessori, including:

- Permanent and temporary paid staff
- Agency and supply workers
- Regular volunteers
- Students and trainees on placement
- Contractors and visitors who may have regular, unsupervised contact with children

One-off volunteers (for example, accompanying a trip) who will not be left unsupervised and alone with children are not required to undergo the full recruitment process; however, they must be supervised at all times by a member of staff who has been fully vetted.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Manager / Owner

- Is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across all settings.
- Ensures that all staff involved in recruitment have completed Safer Recruitment training.
- Must not allow any person to start work, be in ratio, or be left unsupervised with children until all required checks have been satisfactorily completed (subject to the limited exception in paragraph 6.8 below).
- Ensures the Single Central Record (SCR) / staff vetting record is maintained, up to date, and available for Ofsted inspection.
- Makes a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if a member of staff leaves or is dismissed because they have harmed, or put at risk of harm, a child.

5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Provides advice and guidance to the manager on all safer recruitment matters.
- Is consulted where there is uncertainty about the outcome of any check.
- Liaises with the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where required.
- Keeps up to date with changes to legislation and statutory guidance affecting safer recruitment.

5.3 All Staff

- Must read this policy and understand their individual responsibilities.
- Must report any concerns about a colleague's suitability to the DSL or Manager immediately.
- Must disclose any changes in their own circumstances that may affect their suitability (e.g. an arrest, caution, or conviction).

6. Safer Recruitment Procedures

6.1 Planning

- The Manager must confirm the need for the role and ensure adequate time is allocated for the full recruitment and vetting process before advertising.
- The job description must clearly state the responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, the requirement for inter-agency working, and that the role is subject to an Enhanced DBS check.
- The person specification must include specific reference to suitability to work with children and the competencies, values, and qualities expected.
- All recruitment materials must state explicitly that the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and that all convictions, cautions, and bind-overs, including those regarded as spent, must be declared.

6.2 Advertising

- All advertisements must state Little Acorns Montessori's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Advertisements must include the requirement for an Enhanced DBS Disclosure.
- Advertisements must include reference to the exemption from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

6.3 Application Forms

- Little Acorns Montessori uses its own application form; CVs alone are not accepted.
- The application form will request a full chronological employment history since leaving secondary education, including periods of education, training, voluntary work, part-time work, and periods not in employment, with start and end dates and reasons for leaving.
- Applicants must sign a declaration confirming that: they are not on the Children's Barred List; they have no convictions, cautions, or bind-overs (including spent convictions); and the information provided is true and accurate.
- Providing false information is an offence and may result in rejection of the application, dismissal if employment has commenced, and possible referral to the police.

6.4 Shortlisting

- All applicants are assessed equally against the criteria in the person specification. No applicant is excluded on grounds protected by the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).
- Any gaps in employment history or other anomalies identified at shortlisting stage must be noted and explored at interview.

6.5 References

References are a mandatory requirement under the EYFS 2025. The following procedure must be followed:

1. References must be obtained before a new staff member commences employment.
2. At least two references are required. These must include a reference from the applicant's current or most recent employer. Where the applicant is not currently working with children, a reference must also be obtained from the last employer with whom the applicant worked with children.
3. References must be completed by a senior person with appropriate authority (for example, a line manager, headteacher, or setting manager). References from relatives or personal friends are not acceptable.
4. If the applicant has never worked with children, references must be from their current employer, training provider, or education setting.
5. Electronic references must be verified to confirm they originate from a legitimate source. References will be followed up by telephone to verify authenticity.
6. References must address: the applicant's current or most recent role, salary, and sickness record; performance history and conduct; and any concerns about the applicant's suitability to work with children, including the outcome of any investigation.
7. Any concerns raised in a reference must be followed up with the referee before a decision is made.

6.6 Interview

- Candidates will attend a face-to-face interview. All candidates are assessed equally against the criteria in the person specification.
- The interview panel must include at least two people, both of whom must have completed Safer Recruitment training.
- The panel must agree a set of structured questions in advance, which must explore the candidate's attitude towards children and ability to support safeguarding and promote the welfare of children.
- Unexplained gaps in employment history or anomalies identified at shortlisting must be explored at interview.
- Candidates must be asked to confirm whether they wish to declare anything in light of the DBS disclosure process, or any information not declared on the application form.
- As part of the assessment process, candidates may be asked to perform a practical activity in the setting so that their performance and interaction with children and staff can be assessed.

6.7 Pre-Appointment Checks

An offer of appointment is conditional upon the satisfactory completion of all of the following checks. No candidate may commence employment, be counted in ratio, or be unsupervised with children until these checks are complete.

i. Identity Verification

- Photographic identity (e.g. passport or photo-card driving licence) must be verified in person.
- Proof of current address must be provided (e.g. utility bill or bank statement, dated within three months).
- Additional documents may include birth certificate and/or marriage certificate.
- All identifying details, including current and former names, date of birth, and National Insurance number, are recorded on the application form.

ii. Right to Work in the UK

- Evidence of the right to work in the UK must be verified before employment commences.
- For Foreign Nationals, the setting must verify that the individual has permission to work in the UK. Further information is available at www.gov.uk.

iii. Enhanced DBS Disclosure and Children's Barred List Check

- An Enhanced DBS Disclosure, including a check of the Children's Barred List (for roles involving regulated activity), must be obtained for all staff before they commence employment.
- The DBS check reference number, date obtained, and the name of the person who obtained it must be recorded in the setting's staffing records.
- A member of staff should not commence employment before their DBS check result is received, subject to the provisions of paragraph 6.8 below.
- If a person in regulated activity is dismissed or leaves because they have harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm, a referral must be made to the DBS. This is a legal duty.

iv. Overseas Criminal Record Checks

- An additional criminal records check must be obtained for any applicant who has lived or worked abroad (EYFS 2025, paragraph 3.16). The nature of the check will depend on the country concerned. Guidance is available at www.gov.uk.

v. Qualifications

- Original certificates of relevant qualifications must be seen and verified. The awarding body and date of award must be recorded.

vi. Employment History

- A full employment history in chronological order from leaving secondary education must be verified, including reasons for leaving all posts.

vii. Health Assessment

- In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, applicants will not be asked pre-employment health questions prior to a job offer. Conditional offers of employment are dependent on receiving satisfactory health checks confirming the candidate's medical fitness to carry out the duties of the role.

viii. Declaration of Family or Close Relationships

- Applicants must declare any family or close relationship with existing staff or employers at Little Acorns Montessori.

6.8 Starting Before a DBS Check is Complete

In exceptional circumstances only, a new member of staff may commence employment before their Enhanced DBS check result is received, provided that all of the following conditions are met:

8. A risk assessment has been completed and signed by the Manager.
9. The individual must not be left unsupervised and alone with children at any time.
10. The individual is not counted in ratio.
11. The individual must be directly supervised by a member of staff who holds a current, satisfactory DBS check at all times.
12. The DBS application is already in process and must be followed up without delay.

This provision does not apply to any applicant where a concern has already been raised about their suitability. The Manager must document the decision and rationale.

6.9 Online and Social Media Searches

Online searches are not a mandatory requirement of the EYFS 2025, but Little Acorns Montessori regards them as best practice as part of a thorough safer recruitment process.

- Where the Manager decides to conduct an online search, this will be carried out consistently for all shortlisted candidates.

- Online searches must only consider information that is relevant to the candidate's suitability to work with children.
- Findings must be documented and, where concerns are identified, the candidate must be given the opportunity to respond.

7. Induction

All newly appointed staff and volunteers must complete Little Acorns Montessori's induction programme. The purpose of induction is to:

13. Provide training and information about Little Acorns Montessori's policies and procedures, including this Safer Recruitment Policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Whistleblowing Policy, and the Staff Code of Conduct.
14. Ensure new staff have access to the Berkshire child protection procedures, BFSB Safeguarding guidance, and the 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' guidance.
15. Confirm the standards of conduct expected of all staff and volunteers.
16. Provide information on how to raise concerns, including safeguarding concerns, and how to report allegations about colleagues in line with the LADO process.
17. Enable the line manager to identify any early concerns about the individual's suitability for the role and address them promptly.
18. Arrange attendance at mandatory child protection training.
19. Adhere to the BFSB procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers, including arrangements for notifying the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

8. Recording and Record-Keeping

8.1 Staffing Records and the Single Central Record

The Manager must maintain a written record — effectively a Single Central Record (SCR) — of all vetting checks for all staff, volunteers, and contractors. This record must be available for inspection by Ofsted at all times.

For each individual, the record must include:

- Full name and date of birth
- Date of identity verification and documents seen
- Qualification certificates verified (type and date)
- DBS check reference number, date obtained, and the name of the person who obtained it
- Whether a Children's Barred List check was carried out
- Date references received, the referee's name and employer, and any concerns noted
- Overseas criminal record check details (if applicable)
- Date of right to work verification
- Date of induction completion
- Date of initial safeguarding/child protection training, training provider, and course title
- Date of most recent safeguarding training renewal, training provider, and course title
- Date on which next renewal is due (no later than two years from the most recent training date)
- Confirmation that the member of staff has read and understood the Whistleblowing procedures, and the date on which this was confirmed

8.2 Secure Storage

- All recruitment and vetting records must be stored securely, in a locked cabinet or a password-protected digital system, in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Access is restricted to the Manager and DSL.
- Records are retained for a minimum of six years after the individual leaves the setting, or as otherwise required by law.

9. Managing DBS Disclosure Outcomes and Concerns

9.1 Disclosed Information

Receiving a disclosed criminal record does not automatically bar a candidate from appointment. Each disclosure will be considered on its merits, taking into account:

- The nature of the offence and its relevance to the role
- The length of time since the offence
- Whether the offence was a one-off or part of a pattern
- The individual's circumstances at the time

The Manager will consult the DSL and, if necessary, seek advice from the BFSB before making a decision.

9.2 Mandatory Referral to the DBS

Little Acorns Montessori has a legal duty to refer to the DBS any member of staff who:

- Has harmed, or poses a risk of harm to, a child or vulnerable adult, and
- Has been dismissed, or would have been dismissed had they not resigned.

9.3 Reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Where a concern arises about the conduct of a member of staff towards a child, including allegations that a staff member has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child,
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children,

the Manager must contact the LADO without delay. In the Bracknell Forest area, the LADO can be contacted via Bracknell Forest Children's Services. The DSL must be informed immediately.

9.4 Reporting to the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB)

Where a DBS disclosure reveals that a candidate is on the Children's Barred List, has provided false information in support of their application, or there are serious concerns about their suitability to work with children, the facts must be reported to the BFSB and to the police, and Little Acorns Montessori will act on their advice.

10. Equal Opportunities in Recruitment

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to genuine equality of opportunity. Our recruitment and selection process will be applied fairly and consistently to all applicants, regardless of age,

disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, in full compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

A criminal record does not automatically disqualify a candidate. Each case is considered individually (see Section 9.1)

11. Concerns About Colleagues — Whistleblowing

- All staff have a responsibility to report concerns about the conduct or suitability of a colleague. Since 1 September 2025, the EYFS Statutory Framework requires all early years settings to have explicit whistleblowing procedures in place for all staff, including students and volunteers.
- Concerns must be raised with the DSL or, if the concern involves the DSL, directly with the Manager or Owner. Where the concern involves the Manager, staff should refer to the **Whistleblowing Policy** for escalation routes, including external channels such as the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line, Ofsted, and GOV.UK guidance for employees.
- All concerns will be taken seriously, investigated appropriately, and the member of staff raising the concern will be supported throughout. Little Acorns Montessori will not tolerate victimisation of any staff member who raises a genuine concern in good faith.

12. Ongoing Suitability

Safer recruitment does not end at appointment. Little Acorns Montessori takes the following ongoing measures to ensure the continued suitability of all staff:

- All staff are subject to regular supervision and performance management.
- All staff must immediately disclose any change in their circumstances that may affect their suitability (including arrests, cautions, convictions, or being placed on the Children's Barred List).
- DBS checks are renewed every three years for all staff as a matter of best practice, or in line with BFSB guidance where that guidance requires an earlier renewal.
- Staff are encouraged to subscribe to the DBS Update Service, which enables continuous online status checking between renewal cycles. Where a member of staff is subscribed to the Update Service and a status check confirms their certificate remains current and unchanged, this will be recorded in the SCR. Subscription to the Update Service does not remove the obligation to renew the DBS check itself every three years.
- Concerns about a colleague's suitability must be referred to the DSL immediately and will be investigated in line with the Whistleblowing Policy and LADO referral procedures.

13. Training

- The Manager and at least one other member of staff involved in recruitment must complete accredited Safer Recruitment training before participating in any recruitment panel.
- The DSL must complete enhanced safeguarding training appropriate to their role, in line with Annex C of the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025.
- All staff must complete child protection awareness training as part of their induction. In accordance with Annex C of the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025, safeguarding training must be renewed by all staff at least every two years. Full details of training requirements, renewal cycles, and how training is supported in practice are set out in the **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

- Training records, including initial training date, renewal date, next due date, and training provider, must be kept on each individual's personnel file and recorded in the SCR.

21. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner in the event of any changes in legislation or guidance, or following any safeguarding incident. The next scheduled review date is June 2026.

Policy Author	Jonathan Duffy
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Date	June 2026
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