Safer Recruitment Policy

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Version	v1.0
Effective from	1 September 2026
Applies to	All team members across all Pinc organisations
Policy owner	Chief Operating Officer (maintained by the People Team)
Next review	Summer 2027

About this policy

Pinc brings together Pinc Creative College, Pinc Woodlands, Pinc Futures and Pinc Exams. Together we provide specialist education for neurodivergent young people aged 16 to 24, and this policy applies across all four organisations. Where it refers to "Pinc", that means the organisation within the group that employs you. Where anything applies to only one organisation, we say so.

Everything we do is grounded in our values.

We are Individual — we celebrate everyone.

We are Inclusive — we value and support everyone.

We are Innovative — we believe in the power to change.

We work in a way that is Respectful, Responsible, Safe and Kind. The Pinc Methodology holds the individual, their wellbeing and their particular needs at the centre of our approach.

Purpose. To ensure that everyone we appoint is suitable to work with young people, and that our recruitment is safe, fair and consistent across all four Pinc organisations.

Who it applies to. All Pinc team members. Everyone who works for Pinc is employed by us, and throughout this policy "team member" means an employee of one of the Pinc organisations.

Status. This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and may be amended from time to time.

Getting help. If anything here is unclear, speak to your line manager or contact the People Team.

Who to go to

Wherever this policy refers to raising, escalating or referring something, the route is the same:

First	Your line manager	The person you report to day to day. Most things are resolved here.
Second	Head of College or Head of Organisation	Where your line manager cannot resolve it, is unavailable, or is the subject of the matter.
Third	Executive Team	Where the matter concerns a Head of College or Head of Organisation, or where it cannot be resolved at the second stage.

Our approach

Safer recruitment is the first and most important safeguarding control we have. Everything in this policy follows the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and where that guidance is updated this policy follows it.

Ultimate responsibility for recruitment sits with the Chief Executive, with operational responsibility delegated to Heads of College and Heads of Organisation. The People Team maintains the process, holds the Single Central Record, and signs off every start date.

Every appointment is assessed against the same criteria, in the same way, with the same checks. Being consistent is what makes the process both safe and fair.

Before we advertise

Before a role is advertised we agree the mix of qualifications, experience and qualities required, who will be involved in selection, and what each of them is responsible for.

Every role has a role description setting out the duties, who the postholder reports to, and their responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. Every role has a person specification setting out the qualifications, experience, competencies and any other requirements relating to working with young people.

All adverts state the requirement for an enhanced DBS check with barred list information, and carry our safeguarding commitment: “Pinc is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and expects all team members to share this commitment.” That statement also appears on our recruitment pages, candidate information packs, role descriptions, person specifications and induction materials.

Applications

We use our own application form for every role. CVs alone are not accepted. The form asks for:

- Current and any former names, date of birth, current address and National Insurance number
- Academic and vocational qualifications relevant to the role, with awarding body and date
- A full chronological history since leaving secondary education, including education, training, part-time, voluntary and full-time work, with start and end dates, explanations for any gaps, and reasons for leaving
- Any family or close personal relationship with an existing team member
- Two referees, one of whom must be the current or most recent employer. Family and friends are not accepted
- A statement of the personal qualities and experience relevant to the role

Where an applicant is not currently working with young people but has done so before, we also seek a reference from the employer where they last did so.

Criminal records self-declaration

Roles at Pinc are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which means we can ask about certain spent convictions and cautions.

Applicants confirm that they are not on the Children’s Barred List, not disqualified from working with young people, and not subject to a sanction or prohibition imposed by a regulatory body.

Deliberately providing false information may lead to the application being rejected, to dismissal if the person has already been appointed, and where appropriate to referral to the police.

Teaching roles

Applicants for teaching roles are also asked for their Teacher Reference Number and whether they hold Qualified Teacher Status.

Shortlisting and references

Every application is scrutinised for completeness, consistency, discrepancies and gaps in employment. Incomplete applications are returned. Anomalies, discrepancies and gaps are noted and explored at interview — including repeated changes of employment without clear progression and moves from permanent to temporary work.

All candidates are assessed against the person specification, without exception or variation.

References

References are sought directly from the referee and, wherever possible, obtained before interview so that anything of concern can be explored. We do not accept open references, and we never rely on a candidate to obtain their own.

We use a reference proforma, sent with the role description and person specification, which asks about the referee's relationship with the candidate, their suitability for the role, and — for anyone who has worked with young people — their performance and conduct, any current disciplinary sanction, any disciplinary matter relating to the safety or welfare of young people whether or not the sanction has expired, and any allegation or concern raised about their behaviour towards young people and how it was resolved.

References are checked on receipt. Where anything is vague or unanswered, we go back to the referee. Information is compared with the application form and any discrepancy is taken up with the candidate. We verify every reference directly with the person who provided it, confirm that electronic references come from a legitimate source, and always establish the reason for leaving.

Where a reference discloses past disciplinary action or an allegation, we consider how long ago it was, how it was resolved, whether it was found to be unfounded, whether a sanction followed, how serious it was, and whether there is any pattern.

Any concern is resolved to our satisfaction before an appointment is confirmed.

Online searches

We carry out an online search on shortlisted candidates as part of our due diligence. Shortlisted candidates are told in writing, before the search takes place, that one will be carried out.

The search is carried out by a member of the People Team, not by a panel member, and is limited to publicly available information relevant to suitability to work with young people or to hold the role.

We record only what is relevant, and only where we intend to raise it with the candidate. Anything else — including anything revealing a protected characteristic, or unconnected to suitability for the role — is disregarded and not recorded, and is not shared with the panel. Where something relevant is found, the candidate is given a fair opportunity to respond at interview before it is taken into account.

Interviews

Every recruitment process includes a face-to-face interview, even where there is only one candidate.

Panels are made up of at least two interviewers, and more for senior roles. At least one panel member has completed safer recruitment training within the last three years and has authority to make the appointment. Panel members do not interview candidates known to them.

The panel meets beforehand to agree the questions, read the applications and identify anything to explore. The same core questions are asked of every candidate and answers are recorded.

Every interview explores the candidate's attitude towards young people, their ability to support our safeguarding responsibilities, any gaps in their employment history, and any discrepancy or concern arising from their application or references. Candidates are asked whether there is anything they wish to declare in light of the DBS requirement, and where references have not yet been received, whether there is anything they would want to tell us in advance of them.

The invitation to interview sets out the time, place, directions, panel membership, what the interview will cover, and a copy of the person specification. It explains the identity and qualification documents to bring, and that an enhanced DBS check will be required. Adjustments are offered to every candidate.

Pre-employment checks

Every offer of employment is conditional on all of the following being completed satisfactorily:

- Verification of identity
- Verification of the right to work in the UK
- Two satisfactory references
- An enhanced DBS check including children's barred list information
- Verification of qualifications and, where required, professional status
- A prohibition from teaching check, for anyone engaged in teaching work
- A section 128 direction check, for anyone in a management or governance position
- Overseas checks where the candidate has lived outside the UK for more than six months in the last five years
- Confirmation that the candidate is not disqualified from working in relevant childcare provision, where the role involves it

DBS

We require an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information for all roles. Checks must be returned and cleared before employment starts.

Where a DBS certificate shows any disclosure, a risk assessment is completed by two members of the Executive Team before any decision is made. The candidate is given the opportunity to explain.

Team members must tell us if their DBS position changes — if they are arrested, charged or convicted of an offence. A risk assessment follows on the same basis.

We ask all team members to join the DBS Update Service within 30 days of a certificate being issued, and we meet the annual cost. Where a team member subscribes, we carry out an Update Service check annually. Where they do not, a new enhanced check is obtained every three years.

Right to work

We verify the right to work of everyone we employ before they start, using the Home Office right to work checklist. Serious deliberate deception in connection with an application may amount to a criminal offence and may be reported to the police and to the Secretary of State.

All checks are confirmed in writing, recorded on the personnel file, followed up where unsatisfactory or discrepant, and entered on the Single Central Record. The People Team reviews the Single Central Record after every recruitment and signs off the start date once satisfied.

The Chief Executive and the relevant Head of College or Head of Organisation are informed immediately where a candidate is found to be barred or disqualified, has provided false information, or where there is a serious concern about suitability to work with young people.

Single Central Record

The Single Central Record records the completion date and the person who carried out each check, for every team member, and for volunteers working unsupervised, visiting professionals in regular contact with young people, and contractors in regular contact with young people. It records identity, qualification and professional registration checks, references, DBS and barred list information, right to work, overseas checks, prohibition and section 128 checks, and whether the role involves regulated activity.

Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service

We have a legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm to, a child or vulnerable adult where they have been removed from regulated activity — including where they resign before we could remove them.

Referrals are made as soon as possible, normally on conclusion of an investigation, or at the point of removal from regulated activity where the position is clear. Where the individual is engaged in teaching work, referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency is also considered. A settlement agreement will never be used to avoid or delay a referral.

Monitoring

The People Team monitors turnover, reasons for leaving and exit interview themes, and reports to the Executive Team termly, so that our recruitment practice improves over time.