



EMPLOYMENT REFERENCE POLICY

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1. Policy statement

- 1.1** Reach South Academy Trust is committed to providing employment references for current and former staff members as part of their career progression and future employment.

2. Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Statement

- 2.1** At Reach South Academy Trust, we are committed to creating a vibrant and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all. This commitment extends to every aspect of our work; from the education we deliver to the staff we employ. We believe in fairness, equity, and promoting social mobility for all.

- 2.2** We actively promote inclusivity through our People policies and practices. We value and respect every individual, regardless of background, and strive to build a diverse staff and student body that reflects the richness of the communities we serve.

- 2.3** We dismantle barriers to opportunity by ensuring equal access to resources and development opportunities for all staff members. Our People policies are designed to be fair and unbiased, promoting a level playing field for career progression regardless of social or economic background.

- 2.4** Serving Our Local Communities: We actively engage with local communities to understand their needs and perspectives. Our recruitment practices prioritise attracting talent from diverse backgrounds within our local area, further strengthening the connection between the Trust and the communities it serves.

- 2.5** Our People policies are developed and implemented in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This ensures an environment characterised by dignity and respect, free from harassment, bullying, and victimisation.

3. Principles

- 3.1** This policy is in place to minimise the risks to the Trust through use of issuing employment references to current or past members of staff and volunteers.

- 3.2** This policy deals with the issuing of professional references. If provided using the Trust's letterhead, or via a Reach South Academy Trust or school email account, it is likely to be treated as a business reference if there is a dispute.

- 3.3** This policy covers all employees working at all levels and grades. It also applies to consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

- 3.4** This policy does not form part of any staff member's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time in consultation with recognised Trade Unions.

4. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

- 4.1 The Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Chief Executive Officer and the Director of People.
- 4.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the CEO and Director of People.
- 4.3 All managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.
- 4.4 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.
- 4.5 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed, in the first instance to line managers.

5. Legislation governing references

- 5.1 There is no detailed legislation dealing with the provision of references; however, the following legislative Acts are relevant relating to the issuing of employment references:
 - i) The Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977;
 - ii) The Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 relating to those working in the financial services;
 - iii) The General Data Protection Act 2018 regarding the processing of information in providing references;
 - iv) Employment Rights Act 1996 concerning discrimination relating to acts committed by any employer after termination of an employee's contract of employment.
- 5.2 Refusing to provide a reference could be seen as discriminatory by former employees, as a refusal could mean adverse inferences being drawn about the employee concerned by the future employer.
- 5.3 Reach South Academy Trust, as an employer, is under a duty of care to provide a reference which is true, accurate and fair, and does not present facts so as to give a misleading impression overall, including by omission that could mislead the recipient. References must be based on documented facts. Subjective opinions should be avoided unless supported by evidence.

6. Providing employment references

- 6.1 All outgoing references provided must be produced in line with the Managers Guidance for Employee References (Outgoing)
- 6.2 A copy of all references provided on behalf of the Trust will be placed on the individual's personnel file.

6.3 Only authorised and trained personnel may issue references.

7. Liability and disclaimers

7.1 There is no guarantee that a disclaimer will not be successfully challenged in Court. However, the Trust will ensure the following disclaimer is included in the final paragraph of all references given:

7.2 In accordance with Reach South Academy Trust's normal practice this reference is given in good faith and in confidence, without legal liability on behalf of the author or the Trust.

8. Confidentiality and disclosure of references

8.1 All references are given in confidence, but the Trust or the recipient, may be required to disclose a reference under certain circumstances, such as a request for disclosure by an Employment Tribunal or a Court dealing with a negligence or defamation case.

8.2 Under the General Data Protection Act 2018, individuals will have a right to request sight of references written about them by their current or past employer, and those providing references should take this into account.

9. Telephone or verbal references

9.1 Any telephone or verbal reference request should be declined. If a verbal reference is unavoidable, it must be documented and approved by the Director of People before being given.

10. Breach of this policy

10.1 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action. Please refer to the Trust's Disciplinary Policy for further details.

11. Review of policy

11.1 This policy is reviewed as required by the Trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

11.2 We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

POLICY HISTORY

Policy Date	Summary of change	Contact	Implementation Date	Review Date
September	Trade Union consultation	All Recognised Trade Unions	N/A	N/A
October 2020	New policy implemented	HR	October 2020	September 2023
July 2022	Review of policy – new framework	HR	September 2022	June 2025
June 2025	Addition of DIB Statement. Amended references of Human Resources to People.	People Team	July 2025	August 2025
August 2025	Review – no fundamental changes	People Team	September 2025	June 2028