



Reference Policy

Policy Code	HR32
Policy Start Date	September 2016
Policy Review Date	September 2019

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HR4 Recruitment and Selection Policy
- HR16 DBS Procedures Policy
- SW5 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy



1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy covers all requests for references for current employees, students of the Trust and any staff that have left the Trust. Care needs to be taken when writing any such reference, and this Policy will outline requirements that need to be taken into account. The policy applies to all Priory Federation of Academies Trust staff.
- 1.2 The Trust will ensure that there will be a consistent approach when dealing with references. It is the Trusts policy that Managers who provide any references will be honest and give an accurate assessment of an employee's ability. Any response to questions will be answered factually correct and subjective personal opinions will be avoided. Anyone who fails to adhere to the above may render the Trust liable for any loss which the employee could incur as a direct result of any inaccurate statements, opinions or any impression and may also lead to the Trust liable for any discrimination claims. Any such action could lead to Disciplinary Action under The Trusts Disciplinary Policy.
- 1.3 Any references written must be sent to the Head of the Academy or the Head of Human Resources before sending back to the organisation requesting the reference to ensure they are true, accurate and fair.
- 1.4 This Policy can be amended withdrawn, suspended or departed from at the discretion of the Trust. While a reference does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and is non contractual, all employees of The Trust are required to adhere to this policy and any failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Pay, Performance and HR Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. The Pay, Performance and HR Committee has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance to the Head of Human Resources.
- 2.2 Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and insuring its success.



3 Personal References

3.1 Employees of the Trust will not be required to follow the above procedure when writing a personal reference. Personal references may not be written on the Trust's headed paper nor refer to a person's professional performance or their relationship with the Trust. Personal references simply record a person's experience of another. Any individual giving such a personal reference is personally responsible for anything said in that reference. Such references must state that they are a personal reference and do not represent the views of the Trust.

4 Procedure for Providing References

4.1 To provide a consistent approach to reference requests these must be passed to the Academy Head or the Head of Human Resources. If a reference request is received for a current or ex-student this must be passed to the relevant Academy Head or Deputy Head.

4.2 Managers have a duty of care to provide an accurate and honest assessment of the employee's ability. Any responses to questions must be factually correct and avoid providing vague personal statements or opinions which could be subjective. If you are in doubt advice should be sought from the Head of Human Resources before completing the reference.

4.3 References that are about a current or former member of staff which are provided in a professional capacity may only be given by individuals who are on the same pay scale or on a more senior pay scale than the subject of the reference. Any member of staff who receives a reference request must pass on to the relevant member of the Senior Management Team or Director.

4.4 A reference should clearly specify the basis on which it is being provided and this includes:

- The referee's relationship with the subject.
- The length of the relationship.
- The capacity in which the reference is being provided.
- The date of writing the reference

4.5 Sensitive Information – any information should not provide on the reference without written consent of the employee and may only be given the Head of Human Resources. Sensitive information concerns; -

- Racial or ethnic origin



- Political beliefs
- Religious beliefs (or of a similar nature)
- Membership of a Trade Union
- Physical, mental health or other medical condition.
- Sexual life
- The commission of, or proceedings for, any offence committed or alleged to have been committed, the disposal of those proceedings or any sentence issued by a court.

4.6 A request for a reference will not in itself amount to consent for these details to be disclosed.

4.7 Verbal References should not be given without permission of the Head of Academy or the Head of Human Resources and should only be given in exceptional circumstances, as information could be misinterpreted. Where any verbal reference is given there should be notes of the conversation kept and filed.

5 Data Protection and Disclosure of References

5.1 Under the Data Protection Act 1998, an individual has the right to request sight of any references provided by their current or past employer.

5.2 A copy of all references will be kept on the employee/ex-employees personnel file.

6 Procedure for Obtaining References

6.1 This procedure is used for both internal and external candidates applying for jobs and covers all categories of the vacancy. References must be sought from two referees for all posts advertised within the Trust. If an applicant is currently an employee of the Trust, one reference must be from the current employer. If the applicant is unemployed one reference from their most recent employer. (if the applicant has been self-employed, this referee should be able to comment on their work). If the applicant is applying for a teaching post but is not currently employed as a teacher, one reference must be from the school or local authority at which they were most recently employed. If the applicant has not yet been employed, the referee should be able to comment on their experience/performance as a student/pupil.

6.2 The second reference can come from a past employer or someone that the employee has known for a minimum of 12 months. References are requested prior to interview.

6.3 As all posts within the Trust come into contact with students/pupils who are defined



as vulnerable young people, reference requests must ask specifically if the referee is completely satisfied that the candidate is suitable to work with young people or vulnerable adults.

6.4 The Trust will not accept open references and any reference which in the form of a “to whom it may concern” testimonial.

6.5 All offers of employment within the Trust are subject to two satisfactory references being received and must be reviewed by the Head of Human Resources and the Chair of the Interviewing Panel before the employee is confirmed in post. Personal references from colleagues or friends should not be accepted unless given as a character reference. If a reference is received that is ambiguous, is not addressed to a specific individual or raises any concerns then advice should be sought from the Head of Human Resources.

7 Requesting copies of References

7.1 The Trust will not disclose any references given or received for current employees due to an exemption under the Data Protection Act. Once an employee has left the employment of the Trust they can request to see any references provided by the Trust.

7.2 Any such request should be directed to the Head of Human Resources who will balance the rights of the individual who is requesting the reference with any duty of conscience that is owed to the person who wrote the reference.

8 Policy Change

This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.



The Priory Federation of Academies Reference Policy

This Policy has been approved by the Pay, Performance and HR Committee:
Chair of the Committee

Signed..... Name..... Date:.....

Trustee

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Chief Executive Officer

Signed.....Name..... Date:.....

Designated Member of Staff

Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.