



DBS checks: a guide for schools

1. What is a DBS Check?

DBS checks are carried out by the Disclosure & Barring Service, also known as the DBS. A DBS check provides a record of a person's criminal convictions and cautions. The DBS carries out checks for people living or working in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. There are different organisations for those living in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

2. How much does a DBS check cost?

The charges for DBS checks are as follows:

Basic: £18.00 Standard: £18.00

Enhanced: £38.00

Standard and enhanced applications for volunteers are free-of-charge

DBS Update Service: for paid workers, the cost of joining the Update Service is £13 initially and then £13 for an annual renewal. The Update Service is free-of-charge for volunteers.

3. How to decide which type of DBS check to ask for?

The type of check will depend on the role the applicant will be fulfilling in the school. Teaching and support staff roles are in most cases eligible for an enhanced DBS check with access to the children's barred list. That is because these staff engage in the relevant regulated activity: regular unsupervised activity with children.

The DBS's electronic eligibility tool <https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check> can help schools assess whether to ask for this type of check. The definition of regulated activity is set out on page 62 of KCSIE 2023. On page 66, there is also a useful flowchart to guide you on what types of roles are, and are not, eligible for an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list. Another useful document to consult when deciding on eligibility is: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059974/Quick Guide to DBS Checks.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059974/Quick_Guide_to_DBS_Checks.pdf).

4. Who processes the check?

Applications for Standard, Enhanced and Enhanced with Barred List checks must be submitted through a body that has registered with the DBS to submit such

applications. Some registered bodies, such as the LDBS, provide an “umbrella” service to employers (in this case, schools) which are not registered themselves. Depending on the number of applications they process annually, the registered body may be able to process online, rather than paper, applications.

The LDBS charges a £6 administration fee for processing a DBS application. This is waived if a school buys into the HR Service provided by Grow Education Partners, LDBS’ traded services arm.

5. How to fill in the DBS application form: considerations for schools and applicants

It is worth consulting

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbsapplication-forms-guide-for-applicants> if the school or the applicant is unfamiliar with how to fill in the form.

The question in Section e field 55 is now incorrectly expressed, owing to changes in the DBS’ filtering rules (which govern which criminal records will be disclosed in a Standard or Enhanced check). As of November 2023, the DBS says that it will update it as soon as possible.

The question asks: “Do you have any convictions, cautions, reprimands or final warnings which would not be filtered in line with the current guidance?” Since 2020, warnings, reprimands and youth cautions have not been automatically disclosed on a DBS certificate. So the DBS’ current guidance is that responses to this question should not be in relation to reprimands and warnings.

Another recent change is that, on certificates issued after 28th October 2023, all unspent conditional cautions and convictions (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) will be automatically disclosed.

If an applicant is in doubt about how to respond to field 55, they should consult <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs>

6. What types of roles count as voluntary and are therefore eligible for free-of-charge DBS check?

Standard and enhanced, and enhanced with barred list check, volunteer applications are free-of-charge. The DBS definition of a volunteer is as per the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002: “Any person engaged in an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit some third party and not a close relative.”

To qualify for a free-of-charge criminal record check, the applicant must not:

- benefit directly from the position for which the DBS application is being submitted;

- receive any payment (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses);
- be on a work placement;
- be on a course that requires them to do this job role;
- be in a trainee position that will lead to a full-time role/qualification.

Section 68 of the DBS application form states: “By placing a cross in the yes box you confirm that the post meets the DBS definition for a free-of-charge volunteer application. Please note that DBS may recover the application fee if box 68 is marked in error and this could result in the cancellation of your DBS registration”.

7. What forms of evidence of identity are acceptable?

This depends on whether the applicant is a UK or Irish national or an overseas national, and whether the role is voluntary or not. The DBS has provided guidance on this: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-identity-checking-guidelines/id-checking-guidelines-for-standardenhanced-dbs-checkapplications-from-1-july-2021>

The various routes are summarised in the table below:

What evidence should we see?					
	NON-UK NATIONALS		UK NATIONALS		
	Non-UK Paid Employee	Non-UK Voluntary Role Route 1	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3
Evidence Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Primary Document • 2 Supporting Documents (from any evidence within Groups 1, 2a or 2b) • 1 piece of evidence must demonstrate current address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Document from Group 1 • 2 Further Documents from Groups 1, 2a or 2b • 1 piece of evidence must demonstrate current address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Document from Group 1 • 2 Further Documents from Groups 1, 2a or 2b • 1 piece of evidence must demonstrate current address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Primary Document • 2 Supporting Documents (from any evidence within Groups 1, 2a or 2b) • 1 piece of evidence must demonstrate current address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth Certificate issued after time of birth (UK IoM & CI only) • 1 Document from Group 2a • 3 Further Documents from Groups 2a or 2b • 1 piece of evidence must demonstrate current address
Limitations / Extra checks required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if they cannot produce these documents, they cannot submit a DBS check as right to work in the UK has not been established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-UK Nationals applying for voluntary work may need fingerprinting if they cannot produce these documents 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only to be used if Route 1 is not possible • External ID must take place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route of last resort • if the applicant cannot produce these documents, then they may need to be fingerprinted

8. Methods of Evidence Checking

Checking by video link: Until the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, the DBS laid down that identity checking be done face-to-face, with the applicant showing the evidence checker originals of their proofs of identity.

As of November 2023, these documents still need to be paper documents; online bank statements and utility bills, or other documents that have been printed off, are not acceptable.

In March 2020, the DBS announced that the face-to-face rule would be relaxed so that evidence of identity could be checked remotely, with applicants showing evidence checkers documents via video link. As of November 2023, evidence checkers are still permitted to use this method. It is important to note that applicants still need, when they first report for work, to show their employer originals of the evidence they have displayed via video link.

Digital identity checking: On 6th April 2022, legislation came into effect to allow digital checking of applicants' identities. DBS guidelines on digital identity verification can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-identitychecking-guidelines/dbs-digital-identity-verification-guidance>.

This method allows for holders of UK and Irish passports or passport cards to be checked by a certified Identity Service Provider for digital ID verification (IDSP) using digital identity document validation technology (IDVT).

Under the system, employers provide to the IDSP evidence of the claimed identity, by uploading a copy of the passport or passport card. Employers make an image of the appointee, either at an in-person meeting or on a video call, and provide this to the IDSP. The IDSP will then check the image against the biometric information included in the passport. A list of certified IDSPs can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-identity-certification-for-right-to-work-right-to-rent-and-criminal-record-checks/>

Overseas Applicants:

If the applicant is to take up a paid position, you must check their right to work in the UK. Since 6th April 2022, holders of biometric residence permits, biometric residence cards and Frontier Worker permits have been required to have these checked via the Home Office's online system, rather than manually. The applicant will need to give the school their share code and the school can access the link via <https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work>. Retrospective checks are not required on biometric card holders who before 8 April 2022 used their physical card to demonstrate their right to work in the UK.

Irish citizens can use their Irish passport and passport card to prove their right to work.

9. Tasks to be done before sending the form to the countersignatory at the registered body

Once satisfied the application form has been filled in correctly and the correct evidence of identity supplied, the school evidence checker should: tick "yes" in answer to qu 59 on the form, and answer questions 61 to 68. With regard to

question 61, it is vital that, in addition to saying what the applicant's role is going to be, the evidence checker writes "Child Workforce". This signifies that the school is entitled to ask for a standard or enhanced DBS check to be carried out. By crossing "yes" in answer to qu 64, the school also indicates that it is entitled to know whether the individual is banned from working with children.

10. Obtaining the applicant's agreement to show the school their certificate

The DBS certificate will go to the applicant's home address. So schools need to get the applicant's agreement to show them the certificate once they have received it. You can find a template consent form in the LDBS pro formas: the pro forma also says the applicant agrees to their manager/evidence checker sending their certificate number and date of issue to the school's registered body.

Schools also need to make applicants aware of how data collected during the DBS process will be used. The LDBS DBS Service pro forma "Permissions for the Process" requires applicants to sign a declaration saying: "I understand that in applying for a DBS check I am required to have read the standard/enhanced check privacy policy for applicants

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-and-enhanced-dbscheck-privacy-policy>

and I confirm that I have done this. I confirm also that I understand how the DBS will process my personal data and the application options available to me."

When this paperwork has been completed, the school evidence checker should send the form to the counter signatory, who will check it and send it on the DBS.

11. Standalone barred list check via the DfE teachers' portal: should schools do these, too?

The answer in the majority of cases is "no". KCSIE 2023 says that employers should only obtain a separate children's barred list check if they are not required by law to obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information. Applicable situations for school include the following:

- The prospective employee has been previously employed in a school in England and Wales in a post that brought them into regular contact with children and ended not more than three months before appointment; and
- An individual will start work in regulated activity with children before their DBS certificate is available

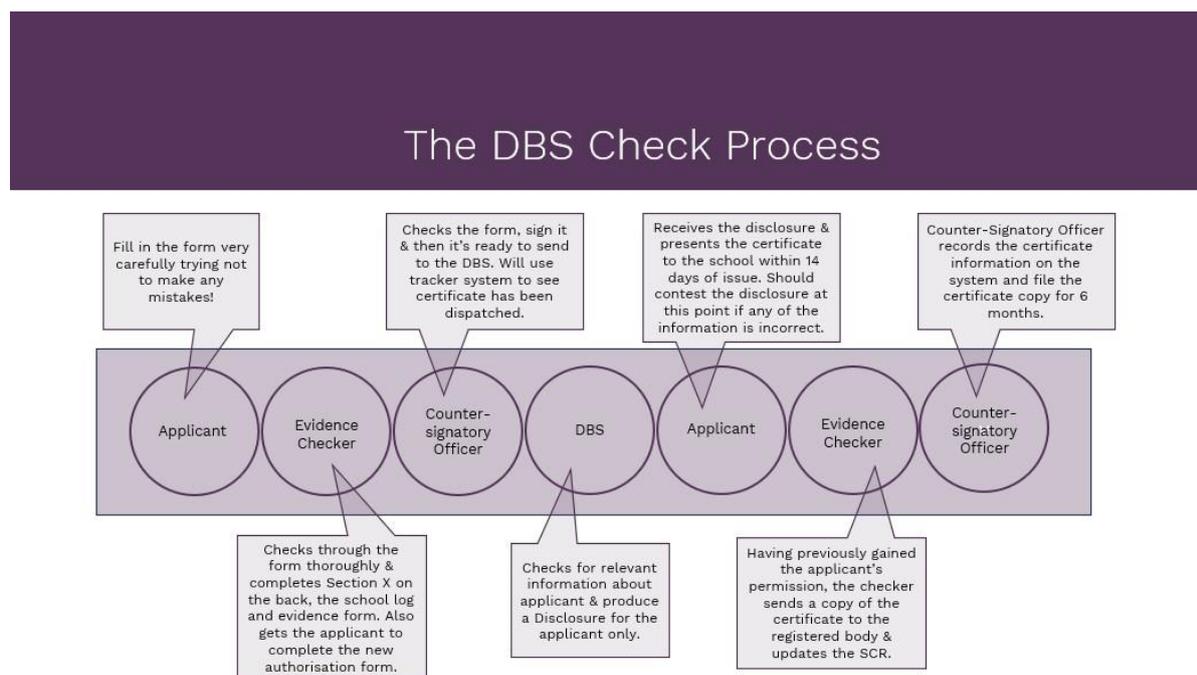
12. What are the further steps?

The applicant should show the school their original DBS certificate within 14 days of receiving it. The school should make a note on the single central record of the certificate number; when it was issued; when the school saw it; and whether it required any further action. Certificates should not be retained by schools except in exceptional circumstances and then for no more than six months. Schools should also send a copy of the certificate to the counter signatory who should make a note of when it was issued and the certificate number. The counter

signatory should in no circumstances retain the copy for a period of more than six months.

If the applicant believes there is an error on their DBS certificate they can raise a dispute and the procedure for doing so is given here: <https://www.gov.uk/report-problem-criminal-record-certificate/dispute-amistake>. Disputes must be raised within three months of the date on the certificate.

13. The DBS Check Process is illustrated in the diagram below:



14. What about the DBS Update Service?

Registering a DBS applicant for the Update Service has benefits for schools and applicants alike. DBS forms do not have expiry dates, but it is considered “best practice” to have school workers checked once every three years. The Update Service obviates the need to do this. For applicants, it means that, provided they are staying within the same DBS-classified workforce, they do not have to apply for a new certificate every time they change employer.

For paid workers, the cost of joining the Update Service is £13 initially and then £13 for an annual renewal. The Update Service is free- of- charge for volunteers.

Applicants need to register for the Update Service within 30 days of their DBS certificate date of issue. To register, they should go to <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>.

To conduct a check on a new employee who is already registered with the Update Service, the school needs to obtain the individual’s permission to carry out a “status check”. The school needs to ask the individual also for their certificate number and date of birth. To perform the check, go to <https://secure.crbonline.gov.uk/crsc/check?execution=e1s1>

The status check will show the school whether there has been any new information about the individual since the DBS certificate was issued. Please note it is vital for the school to see an original of the certificate in addition to carrying out the check.

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