EMPLOYMENT OF UNQUALIFIED TEACHERS POLICY

Using expertise carefully. Maintaining teaching standards. Supporting professional development.



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

This policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures and guidance.

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OUR COMMITMENT

At Riverside Bridge School, every policy reflects our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and ambitious school community in which every pupil is valued, every voice matters and every family is respected and supported.

Our policies translate our values into consistent practice. They support high expectations, clear responsibilities, effective partnership and informed decision-making, ensuring that the needs, rights, wellbeing and future outcomes of our pupils remain at the heart of our work.

We work collaboratively, act with integrity and continually reflect upon and improve our practice to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Our Policy Principles underpin how we work together and guide the decisions and actions we take to support every pupil and their families.



POLICY PURPOSE & FRAMEWORK

Riverside Bridge School policies set out the expectations, responsibilities and approaches that support safe, consistent and high-quality practice across the school. They translate our values, statutory responsibilities and professional expectations into clear guidance for everyday decision-making and practice.

Each policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures, statutory guidance and school frameworks referenced within the document.

Policies apply to the members of the school community identified within each document, including staff, governors, parents and carers, volunteers, contractors and other professionals where relevant. Everyone is expected to understand and apply the requirements appropriate to their role and to seek further guidance where clarification is required.

CURRICULUM DRIVERS



Our Drivers provide a shared golden thread across curriculum, school life, policy and leadership, helping ensure that our decisions and practice remain focused on the experiences and futures we want for every pupil.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy sets out the circumstances in which an unqualified teacher may be employed, the safeguards that will apply, the professional standards expected and the arrangements for recruitment, deployment, supervision, appraisal, professional development and progression towards QTS.

Riverside Bridge School is committed to securing high-quality teaching for every pupil through the appointment, development and retention of skilled, knowledgeable and appropriately supported professionals.

The school will normally seek to appoint teachers who hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). However, Riverside Bridge School recognises that there may be circumstances in which an individual who does not yet hold QTS can make a valuable contribution to pupils' education. This may include individuals undertaking an employment-based route to QTS, teachers trained overseas, or individuals whose specialist professional, vocational or subject expertise is particularly relevant to the needs of the school.

As an academy within Partnership Learning, Riverside Bridge School operates within the legal framework applying to academy schools. At the date of this policy, academies retain greater flexibility than maintained schools in relation to the appointment of teachers without QTS. However, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 introduces powers to extend qualification and statutory induction requirements to specified academies through regulations. Riverside Bridge School will therefore ensure that every appointment complies with the legal requirements and any transitional arrangements in force at the point of appointment.

Partnership Learning is the employer. Riverside Bridge School will make appointments within the Trust's delegated authority and in accordance with Partnership Learning recruitment, safeguarding, pay and employment arrangements.

The appointment of an unqualified teacher will not be used as a means of reducing staffing costs at the expense of teaching quality. Decisions will be based upon the needs of pupils, the requirements of the role, the expertise and potential of the individual and the school's ability to provide appropriate professional support.

This is particularly important within Riverside Bridge School. Pupils may have complex communication, learning, sensory, physical, social and emotional needs and require highly skilled teaching grounded in specialist SEND pedagogy. An individual's specialist experience can therefore be highly valuable, but employment without QTS will never reduce expectations around safeguarding, professional conduct, curriculum delivery, assessment or accountability.

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Our responsibilities to pupils, families and staff

Riverside Bridge School will ensure that any person employed as an unqualified teacher is appropriately recruited, safely deployed and properly supported.

The school will maintain high expectations of teaching regardless of qualification status and will ensure that duties are appropriate to the employee's competence, experience and stage of professional development.

Where an employee is working towards QTS, the school will work appropriately with the relevant accredited training provider and provide the mentoring, training and professional opportunities required by the programme.

Where an employee is not undertaking an immediate route to QTS, the school will nevertheless encourage appropriate professional development and will regularly review whether the employment arrangement continues to meet the needs of pupils and the school.

Through this policy, Riverside Bridge School will make careful and evidence-informed use of unqualified teacher appointments while maintaining its wider commitment to a highly qualified, specialist and professionally accountable teaching workforce.

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APPROVED BY: Governing Board

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Section 01

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Clarifying arrangements. Protecting quality. Supporting appropriate appointments.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear framework for the employment and deployment of unqualified teachers at Riverside Bridge School.

It explains when the school may consider such an appointment, how suitability will be assessed, the professional standards expected and the support and oversight that will be provided.

The policy applies to employees of Partnership Learning working at Riverside Bridge School who are appointed to a teaching role but do not hold Qualified Teacher Status.

This may include employees appointed on a permanent, fixed-term or temporary basis, subject to the legal and contractual position applying to the individual appointment.

It also includes individuals employed as unqualified teachers while undertaking an approved employment-based route to QTS. Current DfE criteria for employment-based ITT require trainees to be employed as unqualified teachers for the period of their training.

This policy does not apply merely because a co-educator, teaching assistant, higher-level teaching assistant or other support employee undertakes teaching-related activity as part of their existing role. Such staff remain employed under their substantive support-staff contract unless Partnership Learning formally appoints them to an unqualified teacher post.

The distinction between a support role and an unqualified teacher role must therefore be clear in the employee's contract, job description, pay arrangements and professional responsibilities.

Section 02

LEGAL, TRUST AND PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORK

Applying current requirements. Following Trust arrangements. Responding to legislative change.

The employment of teachers without QTS is governed by a combination of legislation, academy freedoms, teacher qualification regulations, Trust employment arrangements and relevant DfE guidance.

At the date of this policy, Qualified Teacher Status is generally required for teachers undertaking specified work in maintained schools and certain special-school settings, subject to statutory exceptions. Academy trusts have historically had greater freedom to determine teacher qualification requirements. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 amends the Education Act 2002 so that qualification and induction requirements can be extended to categories of academies specified in subsequent regulations. The legislation is designed to move state-funded primary and secondary academies towards the same QTS framework as maintained schools, while making provision for teachers already lawfully employed without QTS. Riverside Bridge School will therefore operate on the following basis:

- every appointment must satisfy the legal requirements in force on the proposed start date;
- Trust HR will be consulted where qualification status is unclear;
- transitional or grandfathering arrangements introduced by legislation will be applied as required;
- existing employees will not be assumed automatically to retain or lose eligibility because legislation changes;
- the school will apply the actual statutory and transitional provisions in force at the relevant time.

Relevant frameworks include:

- Education Act 2002;
- Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended;
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and regulations made under it;
- current DfE teacher qualification guidance;
- current DfE Initial Teacher Training criteria;
- current safeguarding and safer recruitment requirements;
- Teachers' Standards where applicable;
- current School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document where applicable;
- Partnership Learning Teachers' Pay Policy;
- Partnership Learning recruitment, HR and governance arrangements.

Where legislation or Trust requirements change, the current requirement will take precedence over this policy.

Section 03

DEFINITION AND CATEGORIES OF UNQUALIFIED TEACHER

Defining status. Distinguishing roles. Identifying appropriate routes.

For the purposes of this policy, an unqualified teacher is an employee appointed to a teaching post who does not hold QTS but is lawfully permitted to undertake the teaching responsibilities assigned to them. The term describes qualification and employment status. It is not a judgement about the individual's professional ability or experience.
Unqualified teachers employed at Riverside Bridge School may include several distinct categories.

Employment-based ITT trainees
An individual undertaking an accredited employment-based ITT programme leading to QTS will normally be employed as an unqualified teacher during the period of training. Current DfE ITT criteria specifically require employment-based trainees to be employed as unqualified teachers at a school or academy during training. Their employment will operate alongside the requirements of the accredited training programme.

Individuals with specialist expertise
The school may identify an individual whose vocational, professional, technical, subject or specialist SEND expertise makes them particularly suitable for a teaching role. The possession of specialist expertise alone does not automatically establish suitability. The school must also be satisfied that the individual can fulfil the professional, safeguarding and educational responsibilities of the post.

Overseas-trained teachers
A teacher trained outside England may have a range of possible statuses depending upon where they qualified, whether their qualification is recognised, whether they are eligible to apply for QTS and the legal framework in force at the time. The school will not assume qualification status solely from an overseas teaching qualification. Before appointment, appropriate evidence will be obtained and Trust HR will confirm the employment and qualification position where necessary.

Other lawfully appointed teachers without QTS
Other individuals may be employed where the legal framework permits this and where the appointment is consistent with Partnership Learning requirements. The school will not create a local category of unqualified teacher that falls outside lawful employment arrangements.

Section 04

PRINCIPLES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Prioritising pupils. Using flexibility responsibly. Maintaining high standards.

Riverside Bridge School will normally seek to appoint a teacher holding QTS where a suitably qualified candidate can reasonably be appointed.

The ability to employ an individual without QTS does not create an expectation that such appointments should routinely be made.

An unqualified teacher appointment may be appropriate where there is a clear educational or workforce rationale and the Headteacher is satisfied that the individual has the skills, knowledge, experience and professional potential required for the role.

Decisions will be based upon the requirements of the post rather than the relative cost of employing qualified and unqualified staff.

The school will consider:

- the needs, ages and complexity of the pupils;
- the nature and responsibility of the teaching role;
- the individual's education, qualifications and professional experience;
- relevant specialist expertise;
- previous experience of teaching, training or working with children and young people;
- knowledge of SEND where relevant;
- safeguarding suitability;
- ability to plan, teach, assess and communicate effectively;
- available mentoring and leadership capacity;
- whether the individual is undertaking or intends to undertake a route to QTS;
- the sustainability of the proposed appointment.

No unqualified teacher will be placed in a role where the school is not satisfied that their experience, competence and available support make the arrangement appropriate.

Section 05

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT

Recruiting rigorously. Establishing suitability. Recording the rationale.

Unqualified teachers will be recruited through the same robust safer recruitment framework that applies to other teaching staff.

All statutory safeguarding and pre-employment checks applicable to the role will be completed before employment commences, subject only to any lawful risk-assessed arrangements permitted under the school's Safer Recruitment Policy.

The recruitment process will establish both general suitability to work at Riverside Bridge School and suitability to undertake teaching responsibilities without QTS.

The selection process should normally assess the candidate's:

- specialist knowledge and expertise;
- ability to communicate effectively with pupils;
- understanding of teaching and learning;
- safeguarding knowledge;
- ability to establish appropriate professional relationships;
- capacity to plan and evaluate learning;
- ability to work within a multidisciplinary SEND environment;
- willingness and capacity to engage in professional development;
- potential to meet the professional expectations attached to the role.

Practical teaching or another appropriate assessment may be used where relevant.

Appointment rationale

Before an appointment is confirmed, the Headteacher must be satisfied that there is a clear and defensible educational or workforce rationale.

The appointment decision should identify the basis upon which the individual may lawfully be employed, their relevant skills and experience and any particular supervision or development arrangements required.

Where the individual is joining an employment-based ITT route, the school will ensure that the employment arrangements are compatible with the accredited provider's requirements.

Where legal qualification status is uncertain, Trust HR advice will be obtained before an offer is confirmed.

Section 06

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Clarifying accountability. Providing oversight. Maintaining professional standards.

Partnership Learning is the employer and determines the overarching contractual, pay and employment framework. The Trust is responsible for ensuring that employment arrangements comply with applicable legislation and Trust policy.

The Governing Board provides appropriate assurance within delegated Trust arrangements that unqualified teacher appointments are being made responsibly and that teaching quality remains appropriately monitored. The Governing Board does not need to approve every routine appointment unless this is required by the Scheme of Delegation or Trust arrangements.

The Headteacher is responsible for determining whether an unqualified teacher appointment is appropriate within delegated authority. The Headteacher will ensure that:

- the legal basis for employment is established;
- safer recruitment requirements are satisfied;
- duties are appropriate to the individual's competence;
- appropriate induction and professional support are available;
- teaching quality is monitored;
- pay is determined correctly;
- qualification status is reviewed where relevant.

The employee's **line manager or designated mentor** will provide appropriate day-to-day professional support. They will ensure that expectations are clear, observe and discuss practice, identify development needs and escalate concerns where necessary. Where the employee is undertaking ITT, the responsibilities of the accredited provider, lead mentor and school-based mentor will be followed in accordance with the training programme.

The Unqualified Teacher (the employee) is responsible for carrying out their duties professionally, safeguarding pupils, following school and Trust policies, engaging with supervision and professional development and raising any support needs promptly.

Section 07

TEACHING DUTIES AND PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Teaching responsibly. Working within competence. Maintaining accountability.

An employee appointed as an unqualified teacher may undertake the teaching activities lawfully assigned to their post. These may include planning and preparing learning, delivering lessons and activities, assessing progress and attainment, adapting provision, maintaining records and reporting to parents, carers and professionals. The exact duties assigned will reflect the employee's job description, competence, experience, training status and the needs of the pupils. At Riverside Bridge School, this may include responsibility for highly personalised teaching based on pupils' Education, Health and Care Plans, developmental profiles, communication systems and curriculum pathways. Unqualified teachers are expected to understand and implement Riverside Bridge School's established approaches to teaching pupils with complex SEND, including relevant elements of the school's curriculum, total communication approach, structured teaching and other specialist pedagogies used within their classes. Qualification status does not reduce professional expectations. Unqualified teachers must:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- comply with the Staff Code of Conduct;
- maintain high expectations for pupils;
- plan and deliver appropriate learning;
- assess and respond to pupils' progress;
- work effectively with co-educators and other adults;
- work collaboratively with families and multidisciplinary professionals where required;
- follow school curriculum and assessment arrangements;
- engage with professional feedback;
- maintain accurate records;
- comply with all relevant school and Trust procedures.

Working with other adults

Where an unqualified teacher has responsibility for a class or group, they may be required to direct and coordinate co-educators working within that provision in accordance with their job description and the school's staffing arrangements. The school will ensure that this responsibility is appropriate to the employee's experience and that additional leadership support is provided where necessary.

Section 08

SUPPORT, SUPERVISION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Building competence. Providing support. Developing professional expertise.

Every unqualified teacher will receive an induction appropriate to both Riverside Bridge School and their individual level of experience. The school will not assume that previous professional expertise automatically equips an individual for teaching within a specialist SEND environment.

Induction will therefore include the core requirements expected of all staff together with role-specific professional preparation. This will include, as relevant:

- safeguarding and child protection;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- health and safety;
- pupil-specific needs and risk management;
- curriculum and assessment;
- communication approaches;
- behaviour, regulation and reporting;
- BridgeWorks structured teaching arrangements;
- relevant SEND pedagogy;
- professional responsibilities;
- working with co-educators;
- assessment and evidence expectations;
- school systems and procedures.

Level of supervision

The level and nature of supervision will be proportionate to the employee's experience and circumstances. The Headteacher or delegated senior leader will take account of:

- previous teaching experience;
- relevant qualifications;
- specialist expertise;
- experience of SEND;
- whether the individual is training towards QTS;
- complexity of the class or teaching responsibility;
- pupil safeguarding and care needs;

- observed teaching practice;
- identified development needs.

A highly experienced overseas-trained or specialist teacher may require a different level of support from an individual beginning an employment-based ITT route.

Professional development

Unqualified teachers will have appropriate access to whole-school CPD and role-specific development. This may include coaching, mentoring, lesson observation, joint planning, observing experienced colleagues, specialist SEND training, curriculum development and structured professional feedback. Professional development should be purposeful and linked to the employee's role and identified needs rather than simply consisting of attendance at generic training.

Section 09

APPRAISAL, PERFORMANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Monitoring quality. Supporting improvement. Using the correct procedure.

Unqualified teachers are accountable for the quality of the work assigned to them.

Performance will be reviewed through the appraisal or professional review arrangements applicable under Partnership Learning and Riverside Bridge School policy.

Where the employee is undertaking accredited ITT, the training provider's assessment requirements will operate alongside appropriate school employment arrangements.

Monitoring may include professional discussion, lesson observation, curriculum and planning review, assessment information, pupil progress, safeguarding practice and evidence relating to wider professional responsibilities.

At Riverside Bridge School, assessment of teaching quality must take proper account of the needs and developmental pathways of pupils with complex SEND and must not rely upon inappropriate mainstream measures.

Where concerns arise, the employee should receive clear feedback, expectations and appropriate support.

Sustained capability concerns will be managed through the Staff Capability Policy where applicable.

Matters involving misconduct will be managed through the Disciplinary Policy.

Safeguarding allegations or concerns will be addressed through the school's safeguarding and allegations-management procedures.

An employee's unqualified status must not itself be treated as evidence of poor capability.

Section 10

PAY AND CONDITIONS

Applying Trust arrangements. Recognising responsibility. Maintaining transparency.

Pay and conditions for unqualified teachers will be determined in accordance with the employee's contract, Partnership Learning's Teachers' Pay Policy and any statutory requirements applicable to academy teachers at the relevant time.

At the date of this policy, the STPCD is directly statutory for maintained schools rather than automatically applying to academies in the same way. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 introduces new requirements concerning academy teacher pay and conditions, including powers to establish minimum remuneration and a requirement for academies to have regard to the STPCD when the relevant provisions are commenced.

Riverside Bridge School will therefore follow the current Partnership Learning Teachers' Pay Policy, which will reflect the Trust's legal obligations and adopted pay framework.

Where Partnership Learning applies the STPCD unqualified-teacher arrangements, salary will be determined within the relevant unqualified teacher pay framework having regard to relevant experience, qualifications, specialist expertise and the responsibilities of the role.

Allowances

The STPCD distinguishes between allowances available to qualified classroom teachers and those available to unqualified teachers. Where the STPCD arrangements are applied, an unqualified teacher is not eligible for a TLR payment or SEN allowance in the same way as a qualified classroom teacher. This is because the STPCD defines a classroom teacher as a qualified teacher and provides a separate allowance mechanism for unqualified teachers.

An unqualified teacher allowance may, however, be awarded where permitted by the applicable pay framework. Under the current STPCD model, this may recognise:

- a sustained additional responsibility focused on teaching and learning and requiring professional skills and judgement;
- qualifications or experience that bring added value to the role.

Any allowance or additional payment will be determined through the Teachers' Pay Policy and appropriate delegated authority.

The school will not make informal or locally invented pay arrangements outside Partnership Learning's approved framework.

Section 11

PROGRESSION TO QTS AND CHANGES IN QUALIFICATION STATUS

Supporting progression. Recognising achievement. Applying current requirements.

Riverside Bridge School values professional development and will encourage unqualified teachers to consider an appropriate route to QTS where this is relevant to their role and circumstances.

Progression to QTS will not necessarily be appropriate or immediately available to every individual, but the school will ensure that employees understand relevant opportunities.

Potential routes may include accredited employment-based ITT programmes and other recognised routes available under current DfE arrangements.

Where an employee begins an approved employment-based route, the school will work with the accredited provider to fulfil its responsibilities as the employing school.

Achievement of QTS

When an employee gains QTS, the school will verify their status and review their employment and pay in accordance with:

- their contract;
- Partnership Learning's Teachers' Pay Policy;
- applicable statutory requirements;
- the relevant employment or training arrangements.

Gaining QTS does not in itself automatically create a different substantive post or leadership responsibility, although the individual's pay and contractual position will be reviewed as required.

Where statutory induction becomes applicable, the employee will be supported through the relevant induction arrangements.

Changes in national requirements

The legal framework for academy teacher qualifications is changing.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 provides for QTS requirements to be extended to specified academies through regulations and makes clear that the new requirement is intended to apply to teachers employed after the relevant implementation date, with provision for historic unqualified academy teachers.

Riverside Bridge School will apply any new regulations and transitional protections when they come into force.

The school will not attempt within this policy to predict rights or exemptions that have not yet been brought into force.

Section 12

EQUALITY, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Promoting equality. Monitoring appointments. Maintaining compliance.

Riverside Bridge School is committed to equality of opportunity in recruitment, employment and professional development. Decisions concerning unqualified teacher appointments, duties, training, supervision and pay will be made using objective and relevant criteria and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for disabled employees throughout recruitment, employment and professional development. Qualification status must not be used as a proxy for assumptions about an employee's background, nationality, age or other protected characteristic.

Monitoring

The Headteacher will ensure that unqualified teacher appointments remain appropriate and legally compliant. Monitoring will consider:

- the number and nature of unqualified teacher appointments;
- the rationale for appointments;
- recruitment and safeguarding compliance;
- teaching quality;
- supervision and professional development;
- participation in routes to QTS where applicable;
- employee retention;
- pay arrangements;
- any recurring workforce implications.

The Governing Board will receive appropriate assurance within its delegated governance responsibilities. The purpose of governance oversight is not to manage individual employees but to ensure that Riverside Bridge School is using unqualified teacher appointments responsibly and maintaining high standards.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where:

- teacher qualification legislation changes;
- regulations under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 are commenced;
- statutory induction arrangements change;
- the STPCD or academy pay requirements change;
- Partnership Learning changes its Teachers' Pay Policy or recruitment arrangements;
- experience of operating the policy identifies a need for revision.

Section 13

RELATED POLICIES & FRAMEWORKS

Connecting practice. Strengthening consistency.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Teachers' Pay Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Appraisal Policy
- Staff Capability Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Early Career Teacher Induction Policy
- Professional Development Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- current DfE Initial Teacher Training criteria
- current Teachers' Standards
- current teacher qualification legislation and guidance
- current School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document where applicable
- current Partnership Learning HR and employment arrangements