

Guidance document: Sample interview questions (and red flags) for child-related roles

The following are some sample interview questions to assist you when you are employing or engaging someone to work with children.

When interviewing a person to work with children, amongst other role related questions, it is recommended that the interviewer asks one (or more) of the following questions from each child-related topic.

You should try to employ or engage persons whose answers to questions fall predominantly in the green column below – positive signs. While a person who has one (1) or two (2) answers that fall in the orange column – negative signs, may still be an appropriate choice to work with children (possibly with additional support and training), you should seek advice from the Diocesan HR Manager before employing or engaging a person whose answers fall into the “red flag” category.

Sample Interview Questions	Positive signs	Negative signs	“Red Flags”
Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why did you decide to work with children?</i> • <i>Can you tell us about your recent experience of working with children?</i> • <i>What has working with children or young people taught you about yourself?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convincing response giving a balanced understanding of self and circumstance. • Examples of having considered other options. • A realistic appreciation of the challenges of working with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by personal needs, not the needs of others. • Unrealistic impression of working with children. • Failure to consider other options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows a lack of understanding of a child’s need for boundaries, or talk about unclear boundaries with children, such as being friends with them. • Shows no understanding of children’s needs, expectations and perspectives. • Demonstrates high unrealistic expectations of children. • Wants the role to meet their needs and not the children’s needs. • Uses inappropriate language when talking about children. • Vague about their experience with children.

<p>Recent employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why did you leave your previous employment?</i> • <i>Have you been the subject of a workplace misconduct investigation related to work with children. If so, what was the outcome?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A forthright answer with an explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resigned or dismissed from previous employment due to “personal reasons”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure of inappropriate behaviour if adverse findings were made. • Cannot explain gaps or inconsistencies.
<p>Knowledge of child protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If a parent made a complaint or allegation about a fellow member of staff, what would you do?</i> • <i>If you had concerns about a colleague with regards to his or her behaviour or attitude towards the children in his or her care, how will you deal with this?</i> • <i>Safeguarding children is an important part of our work. Can you give me some examples of how you would contribute to making the organisation a safer environment for children?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an understanding of the mandatory obligation to report allegations of abuse to either their supervisor, the NSW Police, Department of Communities and Justice or Office of Children’s Guardian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vague understanding of reporting obligations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of understanding of reporting obligations.
<p>Discipline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tell me about a time when a child or young person behaved in a way that caused you concern. How did you deal with that? Who else did you involve?</i> • <i>Tell me about a time when you have been working with children and your authority was seriously challenged. How did you react? What strategies did you employ to bring things back on course? With hindsight, how might you have improved your response?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calmly ask the children to stop. Ask them to assist you in rectifying the concern or space, eg help you tidy up the area and put things away • Discuss the issue with the children. • Set up rules and boundaries and supervise the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the behaviour continue because they are only children. • Physically stop the children from misbehaviour (even if the children can manage to stop themselves). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically stop the children from misbehaviour (even if the children can manage to stop themselves). • Use of physical force to discipline, eg smacking. • Use of inappropriate language with children.