

## 7 Costly Mistakes Educators Make When Using Recruitment Agencies

A smart, simple guide for SLT and HR who want stronger hires, calmer processes, and fewer repeat placements.

### Before You Start

This isn't a checklist. It's a short field guide based on what we've seen go wrong — and how schools and colleges fix it when they're ready to expect more.

These aren't just "mistakes." They're habits that creep in over time. This guide shows you where they show up, how to spot them, and how to do things differently.

### Mistake 1: Choosing the Cheapest Option

A low fee doesn't save money if the hire doesn't last.

#### Why this happens

There's pressure to spend less. But a cheaper fee often means rushed placements, minimal vetting, and higher churn.

#### What to do

- Ask what's included in the fee — not all agencies offer the same
- Track cost per hire based on retention, not speed
- Don't confuse loyalty pricing with a budget model. One is earned. The other's just cheap

### Mistake 2: Sending the Same Brief to Multiple Agencies

More agencies doesn't mean better coverage. It usually means more noise.

#### Why this happens

It feels like you're covering your bases. More suppliers, more CVs — quicker fill. But what actually happens? Duplication. Rushed submissions. Agencies cutting corners to be first, not best.

#### What to do

- Stick to one or two trusted agencies per role
- Ask for a short rationale with each candidate — why they were chosen and what briefing they received
- If the CV comes with no context, don't shortlist it

### Mistake 3: Confusing Availability with Suitability

Just because someone is free doesn't mean they're the right fit.

#### Why this happens

You need someone now. But a fast start doesn't always lead to long-term success.

#### What to do

- • Ask whether they've worked in your type of school, setting, or year group before
- • Use trial-to-perm options where possible
- • If someone left after two weeks, ask if they were placed for speed or fit. The answer usually explains the outcome

#### **Mistake 4: Not Giving Feedback on Poor CVs**

No feedback means no change.

#### Why this happens

It's faster to ignore a weak CV than reply. But that creates a cycle of bad matches.

#### What to do

- • Send one short sentence. "No SEN experience." "Too far." "Not qualified."
- • Good agencies adjust fast. Bad ones keep guessing
- • If they keep sending the same stuff, stop explaining. Start switching

#### **Mistake 5: Accepting CVs With No Context**

If there's no explanation, there's probably no plan.

#### Why this happens

Some agencies rush to send CVs just to claim a submission. You're left doing their filtering for them.

#### What to do

- • Ask for basic context with every candidate
- • Minimum info: availability, location, reason for submission
- • If they can't tell you why this person fits your role, don't waste time reading their CV

#### **Mistake 6: Sticking With an Underperforming Agency**

"We've used them for years" isn't a strategy.

#### Why this happens

The relationship's easy. They know the process. You've had a few good runs. But comfort isn't the same as consistency.

#### What to do

- • Review your agency's performance each term
- • Ask whether they're still improving or just coasting
- • If your first instinct is "we wouldn't choose them today," act on it

#### **Mistake 7: Not Setting KPIs**

If your agency isn't measured, they won't improve.

### Why this happens

You track pupil data, budgets, safeguarding, and outcomes. But when it comes to agency results, many teams just trust the process.

### What to do

- Track shortlist-to-interview rate, fill time, and retention
- Share those targets with the agency
- Run a half-termly review. Ask where they're hitting the mark and where they're missing it

### Quick Scorecard — How's Your Agency Actually Doing?

Rate your current agency out of 5 in the areas below. Be honest.

21–25 = Strong

16–20 = Needs review

Below 16 = Probably time for a rethink

### The Harris Lee Partnership Model (Built for Retention)

Step 1 — Assign a single internal lead

Someone on SLT or in HR who owns the relationship and sets the tone

Step 2 — Share clear expectations

We work to targets you care about — not vanity metrics

Step 3 — Run regular reviews

Quarterly or half-termly. No pressure. Just: what's working, what's not, what's next

### Final Word

You don't need to manage agencies perfectly. You just need to stop putting up with the ones that manage themselves badly.

If even one of these mistakes felt familiar, that's a good thing. It means there's something you can fix — fast.

At Harris Lee, we don't want to be one of five. We want to be the one you rely on.

We focus on fit. We plan for retention. We want to be held accountable — because that's how partnerships work.

Want to compare what you're using now with how we work? We'll send you:

- A sample candidate pack
- Our full vetting checklist
- And a clear breakdown of our retention-first offer