

CHESTNUT LANE SCHOOL

Volunteer Helper Policy



January 2022

Introduction

School staff and the Governing Body recognise the valuable contribution that voluntary helpers make to the life of the school. Volunteers can include parents, guardians, grandparents and other relatives of the children in the school, family friends, members of the local community or other people who have a particular talent, expertise or interest which is linked to a class or school based topic. They may help in classrooms and/or around the school, assisting with administrative tasks and educational visits, as well as running PTA and Governor events.

There is a legal responsibility placed on the Governing Body for the safety and wellbeing of the children. There is an increasing recognition that volunteers represent the school and inappropriate actions could leave the school and the Governing Body legally liable. Legislation covering equal opportunities, discrimination and rights, for example, all require schools to treat pupils, their families and staff in legally defined ways.

In addition, volunteers may have little experience of schools since their own time as a pupil. For some, it may be their first time as an adult helping at a school. Typically everyone wants to get it right, and schools need to be practical in helping volunteers to do so. This policy attempts to set out guidance to enable everyone involved in the education of our children to work together successfully in partnership.

Aims

This policy demonstrates the school's commitment to volunteer helpers in school

- We aim to ensure fairness and consistency in our treatment of volunteers
- It informs volunteers of how they can expect to be treated and where they can turn if they need support
- It helps to ensure that Governors and staff fully understand why volunteers are involved and what role they have in school
- It enables the children to meet and work with a wider variety of people.

Why Help in School?

Volunteers have a wide variety of experiences and skills which we are keen to discover and utilise as these can bring an added dimension to our curriculum. We encourage volunteers to be actively involved in the school. This has many benefits:

- Children receive increased support and focus
- Contributions can be made to children's progress
- It supports our role in the local community
- We can offer a wider range of activities
- PTA – finances enable us to improve facilities and resources
- Volunteers gain a better understanding of how the school works
- A wider range of viewpoints contribute to the development of the school as a whole.

General

Requests for volunteers are made at the start of each year but we welcome offers of help at any time. Initial contact should be made to the class teacher. The teacher will then direct volunteers to the school office as necessary.

Volunteers are directed by the teacher according to the needs of the class and the teacher might ask the volunteer to help with an individual, with a group of children, or with a different activity away from the classroom.

Occasionally the teacher has to change their timetable and the volunteer might be asked to work with a different class or group of children, or carry out an alternative task altogether.

On some occasions the school may wish to no longer use the services of a volunteer helper. This should be communicated sensitively to the volunteer helper. If there is a dispute in this area, then the Headteacher's decision will be final.

DBS Disclosure

Following Buckinghamshire County guidelines and as a new volunteer helper to Chestnut Lane School, you will be asked to complete an eform DBS if you are directly supporting any children during your time in school.

We request volunteers help at least once every half term as the school will not renew DBS certificates broken by the 3 month rule (where the DBS becomes invalid if a person has more than a 3 month gap between volunteering visits at our school). This is due to the cost and extra work created for office staff.

It is up to the volunteer to monitor their own attendance, so please make a note of when you should come into school by (3 month rule). The school **will not** send out reminders.

Dress Code

Adults should be generally smart, clean and tidy in their dress to set a good example to the children. Volunteers should dress appropriately for the activity or lesson they are helping with, particularly if this involves volunteering outside. Footwear should also be appropriate for the school environment.

Security

All visitors and volunteers must sign in and out at the school office on every visit. New, or occasional visitors will be issued a visitor's lanyard. This might seem unnecessary in a school where we try to create a family atmosphere, but it is important if we are to help the children identify and make decisions about strangers.

Time Keeping

Please arrive promptly, be regular in attendance, and let us know if you need to cancel.

Parking

We **do not** have sufficient space in the school car park, so would ask you to walk if possible, or park on the road.

Health and Safety

This is the responsibility of everyone. The school has an agreed Health and Safety Policy which is updated regularly. Volunteers should not normally administer First Aid to children. In exceptional circumstances, any first aid is better than none, provided **you are qualified**. If you personally should suffer an accident or injury whilst carrying out voluntary duties please inform a teacher or the office at the earliest opportunity.

Medical Conditions

Please let us know if you have a medical condition which may affect you when on site.

Fire and Lockdown Procedures

A copy of the procedure to adopt if the alarm sounds is posted in each classroom and at various other places around the school. Please ensure you know what to do if the alarm rings.

Toilets

As an adult you should use the adult toilets situated in the corridor of the main block.

Child Protection

Child protection is everyone's responsibility and there are specific guidelines which we must follow in all cases where we suspect children may be 'at risk'. Any concerns should be

discussed with Mrs Rehal, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Mrs Harper, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. Never agree with a child to keep a secret – there are occasions when the school is legally required to make disclosures. Please refer to the Child Protection Advise for Volunteers leaflet.

Mobile Phones

If you need to make, or take, a phone call whilst volunteering, please let the teacher know and go to the main building, away from the children. Whilst volunteering, you are not permitted to take any photographs of children, children's work, staff etc. on mobile phones, and/or cameras.

Breaktime

We ask volunteer helpers to take their breaks in the library. Tea/coffee is available from the staffroom.

Terms of Address

The normal protocol is to refer to staff by their title and surname – both in person and when making a reference to them.

As a general rule, if a member of staff refers to you by your first name (and you are over 18) it would be appropriate to call that member of staff by their first name in return

Equality and Diversity

We are firmly committed to equality and diversity in all areas of our work. We value all cultures and traditions. We are committed to developing a school in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and share.

It would be inappropriate to make comments which suggest that boys are in any way better than girls or visa versa, even as a joke. Similarly it would be inappropriate to suggest that some activities or resources are more appropriate to one sex, eg "he's a boy and boys don't read books", or "boys will be boys".

Children are very observant and can comment on what they see. Issues of colour, race, accent or faith need to be handled carefully to ensure children and their families feel that they are part of the school community. Negatively highlighting differences (or allowing children to) could lead to a sense of isolation.

Inclusion

It is illegal for schools to treat children with disabilities less favourably. Schools are required to modify and develop their activities to enable all children to participate and be included.

Confidentiality

Work in school often opens up information which is of a confidential nature and, as professionals all people working in schools are expected to respect this confidentiality. Should a volunteer helper become aware of a confidential matter whilst working in school, then we would expect this confidentiality to be observed. Please ensure that matters relating to the welfare of pupils are not discussed where you might be overheard by other parents or pupils.

Should any parent ask questions about ability or progress of any child then they should be directed to the class teacher. This prevents misunderstandings. There may be times when staff cannot give volunteers full background information regarding children.

Feedback to Staff

Staff are always keen to know how things are going. Please keep us informed. It is useful to know if there are any problems – we can try and put them right. It is a great boost to know when things have gone well. The best time to provide feedback is at the end of a lesson when the teacher has finished dealing with the class.

Behaviour

The behaviour of a child is the strength of the school and is based strongly on mutual respect. **If children misbehave when working with you or near you, please intervene, even if they are from another class.** It's important that children feel that all adults around the school are concerned about good behaviour. If children talk loudly, please remind them that they're disturbing others. It's usually enough simply to remind a child exactly just what it is that they should be doing. For example "please walk", "please put the pencil back in the pencil pot", "please think about others' feelings". If misbehaviour continues, if you are unsure, or the child does not respond positively tell the class teacher or teaching assistant right away. The best approach, though, is to be positive: **CATCH THEM DOING SOMETHING GOOD** – and tell them!

Supporting Learning

The reason volunteers are in the school is to support learning. If volunteers are in the classroom it is important to understand the main objective of the lesson for the child or group being worked with. Knowing the intended outcome of an activity will affect the way the child is supported. The teacher will always try to make it clear. If for some reason it is not, don't be afraid to ask.

If a child is struggling

It is when children are grappling with tasks that their learning takes place. Try not to step in too quickly if a child appears to be experiencing problems. For instance, children often appear to be struggling over words when reading, there is a good chance that they are using all the techniques they have been taught to decode the words and meaning in the text. If you jump straight in, it deprives the child of the chance to use their skills to work out the problem word. Instead, wait a while to see if they self-correct and if not, ask a question to guide them to the word. Similarly with practical work, discuss the task with the child, rather than take over, even if it seems difficult. Quite often, support, gentle questions and praise are enough to ensure success....and a happy child.

Physical Contact

There should be no physical contact between volunteers and pupils. If you become aware that a child requires assistance please direct them to a member of staff.

Tidying up

We expect the children to be responsible for their own tidying up. It is appropriate to supervise and help out if a child is struggling, but don't do too much. We want our children to be independent.

Next review January 2024



Declaration

We ask each volunteer helper to sign a statement confirming they will respect the privacy of all members of Chestnut Lane School and have read this policy.

Volunteer Policy

Name.....

Parent / Guardian / Other (please specify).....

- I have read the volunteer policy and agree to follow the guidance set out within it.
- I have read Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education and agree to follow the guidance set out within in.
- I confirm that I will respect the privacy of all members of Chestnut Lane School.
- If I have a DBS certificate I understand that if I have a break in service (over 3 months) my DBS **will not** be renewed.
- I have / have not any medical condition or allergy of which I need to notify you (please give details as appropriate)

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Signed..... Date.....