

SOUTH OTTERINGTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL VOLUNTEER HELPERS IN SCHOOL POLICY STATEMENT

The School has established a policy in support of parents (and other adults) wishing to work as volunteers in school. There are two main ways of helping:

- a) Occasional support e.g. at sports events or school trips. These are individual events and generally parents/volunteers only commit themselves to one or two occasions.
- b) Regular support. This is when parents or helpers offer regular weekly support to the school for a period of time. Usually the commitment will be for a term and will consist of one or two timetabled weekly sessions.

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS WORKING IN SCHOOL

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in school.

Volunteering can take many forms and we appreciate the help that our volunteers give us to support the work of the school.

We value our volunteers and we hope that you will enjoy working with us. We have produced this guide to help you feel comfortable working in school and we hope that you will also feel able to ask any questions as they arise.

The points of contact for volunteers in school are as follows:

- the class teacher you work with
- the school office
- the headteacher

It is important for school security and fire regulations that all staff, visitors and volunteers to the school can be identified and located at all times and we ask you to follow the simple routine of :-

- a) Signing in and out when coming into and leaving the premises
- b) Wearing the Visitor badge we give you at all times whilst in school

WHERE CAN I WORK?

The short answer is ~ Almost anywhere!

Please let us know if you have a strong preference about the age group with which you would like to work or if there is a particular task on which you would like to focus. You might even have a preference for which class you would like to volunteer. If you would like to share your time between several classes or if you find you do not enjoy the volunteering opportunity we offer, please let us know. We want you to be happy and we want you to know that we value your time and energy!

HOW MUCH TIME MUST I GIVE?

Another short answer — It's up to you!

We appreciate all the time you choose to offer. Some volunteers prefer to have a timetable. Some prefer to arrange single visits when they can spare some time.

All we ask is that you let us know if you have made an arrangement with the school but find that you can't come. Your work in school is valuable and the teacher may have been counting on you to help with an activity that cannot go ahead without your help. Let us know if you cannot come - just give us a call or send a message in your child's homework diary so that we can avoid disappointing the children.

School is a work place and you will be supporting children's learning and joining a committed team of staff and volunteers.

WHERE CAN I GO IN THE SCHOOL?

As a volunteer you will be expected to work with the teacher/s whom you have decided to help. For most of the school day, therefore, you will be sharing the classroom with the teacher/s concerned. The teacher will be responsible for you and if you are in any doubt about your role, where you should be working or questions about the school please ask your teacher. Apart from moving about the school in the normal course of the day, we would expect you to stay with the teacher who will supervise your activities.

If you are with us during break times, you can join your teacher in the staff room. You can leave your personal belongings in the staffroom. We have lockers that you can use to store your belongings securely. You can use the toilets that the staff use. Please do not use the children's toilets.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WHILST WORKING IN SCHOOL?

We expect all members of the school community to be polite, courteous and self-disciplined. Pupils watch us and follow our example. The same rules apply to staff, children and volunteers working in school. Please discuss problems with the teacher or headteacher. The teachers in school are expected to act "in loco parentis" — this means in place of the parents. They are responsible for the children whilst they are at school.

- Never get into an argument with children or adults. Teachers are trained to deal with problem situations and they are paid to take responsibility.
- Never tell off a child. The school has a code of discipline which children are expected to follow. As a volunteer you are not expected to discipline children. If there is a problem – tell the teacher straight away.
- The only time we would expect any adult to intervene is to prevent a child hurting themselves or another child. Do this by telling them quietly and firmly to stop.
- Never shout at a child.
- Never hit a child.
- Never restrain a child.
- Never threaten to hit or manhandle a child.
- Never be left in sole charge of a child.
- Read the school behaviour policy and anti-bullying policy.

AM I INSURED WHILST WORKING AT THE SCHOOL?

You will be insured for the same activities as teachers. The school policy is available for you to see in the school office. Please read it and ask the teacher with whom you work if you are unsure about anything. Basically, as long as you follow the guidelines in this booklet you will be covered by the school insurance policy for most ordinary occurrences.

If you transport children either in your own transport or in school transport you will need to be certain that your insurance policy or that of the school covers you. Please check with the school office or your teacher.

IF I AM CLAIMING STATE BENEFITS SUCH AS JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE OR SICKNESS BENEFIT WILL I BE ABLE TO WORK AS A VOLUNTEER AT SCHOOL?

The rules change sometimes and your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS - number in local telephone directory) will be able to offer you straightforward advice if you have any doubts. The CVS is not government department.

WHAT WORK SHOULD I NOT UNDERTAKE?

Some activities would bring volunteers into conflict with employed persons and may strain industrial relations. The school will know which these are and you can ask to see the guidance notes if you wish.

Health and Safety Regulations will prevent you undertaking some activities. These Regulations are available for you to read if you wish.

Some activities will expose you to unnecessary risks and teachers supervising your work should ensure that this does not happen. For example, never be left alone with a child or children. You should be clear about your responsibilities and your role at the school. If in doubt check with the headteacher.

DO I NEED TO FILL IN ANY FORMS?

For legal reasons all adults with substantial and long-term contact with children in the school must undergo a simple check (DBS). We will help you fill in the form and explain it you. This is for the safety of the children which you will agree is of prime importance.

You will have a nominated teacher as a contact in school. Whilst you are working in the school, please tell this teacher where you will be if you are not working with them. If there is a fire drill or an emergency we will contact that teacher first. This is very important for your safety.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

We expect our volunteers to abide by the same code of confidentiality as teachers. You will be asked to sign a short form. Please see the headteacher if you have any queries about this.

WHAT IF I AM NOT HAPPY?

You will have opportunities to discuss how you feel about your volunteering with the teacher responsible for you but if you are unhappy in the meantime please tell us!

Please do not just leave. If it is work or other problems one of us will be pleased to listen and help if we can. It's the least we can do in return for your valuable time and commitment!

AND FINALLY....

We would like to thank you for offering to volunteer to help at our school. We regard you as a friend and member of our team. We have a professional duty to you - just as we have to all members of staff ~ to make your time with us happy and fulfilling.

Together we make a great team!

VOLUNTEER HELPERS IN SCHOOL ~ GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

We all agree that volunteers in school can make a great difference to children's work. It also gives parents a chance to be involved in the life of the school. The following points should be followed so that all helpers are aware of their role and the school can make maximum benefit of their help for the pupils.

1. ALL voluntary helpers* must undergo a police check in order to ensure that the children are protected. Contact the school office so that a form and a letter can be given to the helper.
2. Voluntary helpers are given a copy of the school's guidelines for such helpers, this includes notes about confidentiality and references to the school behaviour policy. A record is kept of volunteers who have received the guidelines, so that we know if people have received a copy in the past.
4. A register of voluntary helpers is kept in the school office. In this way we can keep track of police checks, guidelines etc. It is very important that all staff inform the office of any "new" helper.
5. All volunteers should be reminded to sign in and out of school, and to wear a visitors badge for the duration of their visit.
6. Make sure that you take time to explain the learning objectives and outcomes so that helpers feel confident about what they are doing.
7. Don't ask helpers to do things they are not happy with. Some parents prefer to help with practical tasks while others do not. Take time to find out what they are happy doing, it makes the working relationship much more productive and means that they will keep coming back!
8. If you have a concern about a helper, in the first instance a quiet word may resolve the issue - usually it is just a case of not knowing. For more serious issues teachers should inform the headteacher.

* The only exceptions to this will be those who visit the school for a short period only and who will be supervised by a member of staff **AT ALL TIMES**. Please consult the headteacher before making such arrangements.