

Volunteer Helper Policy

Written June 2004. Reviewed 12 October 2010



1. INTRODUCTION

This policy should be seen as the background behind the Induction Pack and Induction Process. Every volunteer goes through the same induction process as every member of staff. The Induction Pack is available from the school office. It is however delivered, not handed out to be just read.

2. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The ethos of Molescroft Primary School is to provide every child with a happy, caring, learning environment in which he or she can develop their full potential - whatever their needs and irrespective of ability, disability, race, or gender.

Molescroft Primary school believes that :

The greatest resource a school can have is it's teaching staff. However no teacher can be expected to know everything or be good at everything. Nor must we presume that our Professional skills are unique. Parents and other members of the community have many skills which can be deployed in a school on a voluntary basis for the benefit of the children's education.

In the demanding world of Primary School Education, volunteer helpers in the classroom are a great asset in helping teachers to offer a much broader and differentiated Curriculum. They can make the most exciting and rewarding of activities which teachers wish to promote actually possible.

Volunteers cannot be expected to just "do". Their generous offer of time, requires of the school to equip them properly for the tasks asked of them. Instructions must be clear. Volunteers support and supplement the teacher's work. They do not replace the teacher.

Having volunteer helpers in school is not a one way route. It is hoped that not only will volunteers gain a real insight into the work of the school and how education works, they will also thoroughly enjoy the experience. Perhaps their work in school may open doors for them.

Volunteer helpers are most welcome.

3. AIMS

- To enrich the educational possibilities for the children.
- To make more effective the teaching within the school.
- To promote the partnership between home and school.
- To demonstrate that education continues through life
- To give adults the opportunity to use their talents in school for the mutual benefit of the children and themselves.
- To give parents and other adults confidence.
- To enable children to have more time to communicate their ideas and thus develop

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their understanding.

- To release teachers from certain tasks thus giving them more time for quality teaching, preparation and assessment.

4. PERSONNEL

The Head Teacher is the Coordinator for volunteer helpers and is in charge of the induction programme.

5. WHO IS A VOLUNTEER?

- Anyone who wishes to be one, providing they can fulfil all the Safeguarding Children requirements.
- Secondary school pupils on work experience placements are accepted provided that they do not live in the school catchment area. An exception however is granted to sixth form students who live within the area. Providing their school is willing to confirm that the student is actively seeking and realistically considering teaching as a career, then the Head Teacher may consider accepting the student as a volunteer helper.
- Volunteers do not need to be Parents or Carers. Grandparents and other people from the community may wish to be involved. Volunteers may help in School on a regular basis or may have a specific skill, knowledge or interest which can be called upon intermittently.

6. INDUCTION

Introduction meetings are held for all adults who wish to become volunteer helpers. At these meetings volunteers are taken through the Induction Pack, which they retain, by the Head Teacher. The same Induction is given to students on work placement. The Induction pack incidentally forms the first 24 pages of the Staff Handbook and the Governor Handbook.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is extremely important.

Volunteer helpers are reminded that they will see all sorts of things going on, some of which may surprise them. Whatever volunteers see or hear, particularly concerning children must not be repeated, except to a member of staff.

Teachers will respond to different situations for different reasons.

Volunteers are reminded that the staff are professionals and will have reasons for changing tactics, particularly linked to setting targets for individual children.

Volunteers may also overhear staff discussing pupils and their concerns.

Volunteers must remember that this is the teachers/teacher assistants' place of work and that they need to discuss issues with each other. These are of a highly confidential nature and must never be repeated out of school. Volunteer Helpers are however made aware of

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the Whistle Blowing Policy and how this can be used if a Volunteer is concerned that something inappropriate is occurring in school.

GENERAL CONFIDENTIALITY

Thus, all information and comments made in school, remain confidential to school. It is unprofessional for staff, visitors or volunteers to comment on individual children to others outside school, including the child's parents except through the appropriate and official channels.

Parents have the right to see all and any records kept on their own child. This can be requested of the Head Teacher.

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Volunteer Helpers are directed to the Data Protection Policy. They are reminded of their responsibilities NOT to divulge any information to a third party. If in doubt they must check with the Head Teacher.

8. REFRESHMENTS

Volunteers are welcome to a free drink at breaks available from the Staff Room. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that their helpers are looked after and not abandoned at break times etc.

9. WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Volunteer Helpers are given advice on how to work with children and their role is defined. The following extracts are from the Induction Pack:

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

If you are working with children try to talk to them in a quiet manner. Ask questions which involve them in conversation. Ideally you want them to explain their work and show that they understand. Questions should therefore be open ended, e.g. begin questions as "Why do you think? Rather than "Is that a?"

WHAT IF I AM UNSURE ABOUT THE WORK

Before you begin a task with children the teacher will give you clear instructions. If you are unsure of any aspect please ask the teacher.

If while you are working with the children something unexpected crops up, ask for clarification. The teacher will be pleased that you asked.

This is often the case when hearing children read.

"Should I tell a word when a child gets stuck?"

"Should I make him/her sound it out?"

"How long should I give a child to try the word?"

"Should I give clues?"

"Should I read with the child?"

The answer to all the above is "It will depend on the age of the child, the individual child

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and the book". So ask the teacher what is generally required and if there are any special requirements.

WHOSE WORK IS IT ANYWAY?

It is so tempting to do the work, 'I'll just cut it out for them', or 'I'll just mix the paint'. It is human nature to want to help someone who is not finding it easy. Children learn by doing and therefore must be allowed to have a go even if the end product doesn't look right. If a child really seems to be frustrated have a word with the teacher.

10. DISCIPLINE

Children at Molescroft Primary School are very well behaved and work very hard. They enjoy school but it is pointed out to volunteers that they may see a child misbehaving as children do from time to time. Even the most angelic will test boundaries particularly with someone new.

The staff do not expect a volunteer to have to put up with uncooperative children. If a volunteer is working with children who are being silly, the volunteer is asked to remind them calmly **ONCE** that they are expected to do the task sensibly. If the pupils do not respond volunteers should not try to cope. It is also vital that volunteers do not sort out bad behaviour by him or herself. Volunteers must return uncooperative pupils to the teacher. Volunteers must never chastise or touch a child.

11. WHAT ADVICE TO EXPECT FROM TEACHERS

Before volunteers begin a task with children the teacher must give clear instructions. It must also be made clear that volunteers should ask for advice if they are not sure about something.

Clear instructions should be given if volunteers are hearing readers as to what they should do if a child gets stuck.

12. WHAT TO DO IF THEY FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT SOMETHING.

Volunteers are not being paid and therefore staff should be sensitive to what they ask of the Volunteers. Some will willingly be involved in anything while others will feel most unhappy with certain activities.

Volunteers are reminded however that they cannot expect to do their favourite activity every time.

13. P.E. REGULATIONS

Adults are not allowed to actually play contact sports with children. The differences in physical size and strength could make it dangerous for the children. Volunteers can however help with skills teaching.

14. REGULATIONS ON ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL

It is the duty of the Education Authority to ensure the safety, health and welfare of all visitors to any of our premises. Where it is reasonably practicable, and to complement

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security systems, all visitors sign a visitor's book, which should be available at all times.

At Molescroft Primary School all visitors are given a badge indicating who has admitted them onto the site and the date.

Visitors will not be allowed to enter unsupervised work areas unless accompanied by an appropriate member of staff and must observe any safety rules. **Visitors may not enter the Kitchen without permission from the Cook In Charge.**

In the event of an emergency situation, visitors are in the care of who their business is connected with and they must be directed to a place of safety whilst the employee reports to the assembly point. **Signs displayed around the school indicate to visitors where they should assemble in the event of a fire.**

At Molescroft Primary School bells do not sound during the school day. Any alarm ringing therefore should be assumed to be an emergency alarm and the building evacuated accordingly.

Personnel helping out in premises should be made aware of the health and safety arrangements applicable to them through the supervisor/teacher to whom they are assigned. Such notice should be drawn to their attention.

ALL VOLUNTEER HELPERS READ THE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN INFORMATION DURING THEIR ANNUAL INDUCTION

15. ABSENCE

Volunteers are asked to telephone the school if they cannot come into school when expected.

16. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Volunteers are reminded of important rules and guidance.

This is covered in the Induction pack and training. Volunteers are shown where to access specific Health and Safety policies. The key areas are discussed. Ideally volunteers should have nothing to do with first aid, but they are reminded of the following:

ACCIDENTS

If a child is ill or has an accident to please tell the nearest teacher at once.

That disposable gloves to deal with wounds sickness or other bodily fluids must be used.

Not to touch blood or vomit.

If hypodermic needles or syringes are found not to touch them.

That all accidents are recorded in an accident book and that if they witness one they will be required to help in filling in the details.

The same applies to 'Near Miss Incidents'.

FIRE

Volunteers are asked to read the Fire and Bomb Notices in the classrooms and corridors.

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ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

If volunteers are using electrical equipment they are asked to check plugs and leads to make sure that they are safe. Any faults are to be reported to the teacher.

C.O.S.H.H. APPROVED SUBSTANCES

As we are only allowed to use approved substances, volunteers are asked not bring any materials into school. e.g. glue

BAKING

If volunteers are helping with a baking activity teachers must make sure that the Volunteer has the opportunity to wash their hands. Perhaps the volunteer could demonstrate to the children and then the volunteer could check that the children do it properly.

(IN THE CLASSROOM NOT THE IN THE TOILETS!)

CARRYING

Volunteers should not be asked to carry heavy or awkward items.

SMOKING

Smoking is not allowed in the school building or anywhere on the premises.

17. POLICE CLEARANCE

All Volunteer helpers have to complete a form which is sent to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). We then follow the advice of the CRB. Volunteers would be excluded if there was a previous conviction for child abuse or other sexual crime.

All forms are kept in the strictest confidence.

NO VOLUNTEER(S) WILL BE LEFT UNSUPERVISED WITH A CHILD(REN).

THIS MEANS IN A ROOM WITHOUT A TEACHER OR TEACHING ASSISTANT PRESENT.

THE LIBRARY IS COUNTED AS PART OF THE NORTH BLOCK ROOMS PROVIDING THE DOOR IS OPEN.

VOLUNTEERS MAY WORK IN CORRIDORS WHERE THERE IS PASSING HUMAN TRAFFIC

18. INSURANCE

All volunteers are insured by means of a blanket cover operated through the Education Authority.

19. ARRIVAL

All volunteers are to use the front door and sign the visitors' book held by the Administrative Officer. When leaving they sign out in the same manner.

All Volunteer Helpers must wear a badge. In the event of a fire the Volunteers would evacuate with the rest of the school. An Admin Officer delivers the Visitors' Books to the Fire Meeting Point on the South Playground.



20. POSSIBILITIES

These are the suggestions made to Volunteers. The list is by no means exhaustive:

- Hearing children read
- Supporting groups with activities
- Making educational games, activities and materials.
- School library
- P.E
- Art
- Design Technology e.g. supervising a glue gun.
- Computers
- Helping children with Special Educational Needs
- Leading Discussion Groups (* Special training will be given)
- Book Making / Picture mounting (* Special training will be given)
- Music Recorders
- Music Other instruments
- Infant Help (Setting up & Clearing up)
- After school clubs
- Science experiments

Volunteers are given the opportunity to opt to work in the same area as their children or not to do so. They are also given the choice of the age groups that they work with. The school however reserves the right to prevent a parent being a Volunteer Helper in a particular class if it is felt it could be detrimental to either the volunteer's own child or any other.

21. TRAINING

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Where necessary, specific training and/or advice will be given to ensure that volunteers who wish to do certain activities are equipped to do the activity to the best of their ability.

22. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Many children with S.E.N. need to be involved in simple repetitive tasks, which albeit simple in nature are nonetheless time consuming. Without divorcing their responsibilities teachers may find that volunteers can be a real asset in helping children with such Special Needs. Often a volunteer helper will be asked to help a particular child access elements of the work. This may be reflected in reading instructions or displays for the child or scribing for him/her. This may be the case on an Educational Visit. On such an occasion, volunteers should in general see their role as an interpreter, an assistant, and above all a questioner to make sure the children don't miss things and through discussion actually relate to and understand what they are looking at.

23. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Historically women have tended to offer their time to help in school more than men. There are men however with the opportunity to come into School and should be encouraged and made to feel at ease.

It is a good opportunity to use Volunteer Helpers to work in a range of activities which do not reflect Stereo-typical norms.

e.g. Women helping with Technology.
Men helping with Baking.

It is important that through our approaches to parents and carers that pressure to become a volunteer helper is not exerted. Many adults will prefer not to be involved in this manner for all sorts of reasons. Their wishes should be respected.

RACISM

Any racial incident or comment witnessed in school must be reported to the Head Teacher. The person reporting the incident will be asked to complete a Racial Incident Form. The Head Teacher will act on this and incidents will be reported to the LA via a termly return.

24. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

There are many people with computer skills, and equally many with a fear of computers. Training of volunteers who are interested could provide the school with a bank of volunteers who could sit with children at computers to assist them when they are unsure or become stuck. They could in turn show the children how to use different features of a program. In turn volunteers could develop their knowledge of computers and help them in their own work search for work or at home.

25. EDUCATIONAL VISITS

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A vital supporting role for volunteer helpers is when asked to accompany children on a visit. Educational visits are a regular and important part of the educational programme at Molescroft Primary School, but they are not cheap. It is therefore vital that the children get the maximum value from the experience. Sometimes professional guides are available to explain what the children are looking at. More often than not however the adults accompanying the visit have to act as the guide helping to interpret to the pupils what they are seeing.

Volunteer Helpers accompanying such a visit you should expect to receive information from the class teacher indicating:

- The objectives of the visit.
- A list of which children are with which adult.
- How specific children should be assisted (if applicable).
- What the pupils are allowed to do and where they can go.
- What the pupils are not allowed to do and where they cannot go.
- How to proceed when there are a number of attractions to view:

Specific skills, knowledge, understanding or attitudes the children should develop at certain places on the visit. Volunteers will not be expected to be an expert on a particular topic but should receive a copy of necessary information at least a day in advance of the visit to enable a volunteer to effectively help the children.

THIS INFORMATION MAY BE PRESENTED IN THE FORM OF A RISK ASSESSMENT

It is normal on visits that the children are divided into small groups each with an adult. Sometimes these groups move around together, sometimes independently. In either case as a group leader volunteers should be trained to help the children to understand what they are seeing by:

questioning encouraging pointing out

Volunteers must also note the following:

Children are never left unsupervised.

Volunteer Helpers are not expected to put up with or deal with any bad behaviour. Children who do not cooperate should be returned to a teacher as soon as possible (without abandoning any other group members.)

As in school, confidentiality must be maintained.

There must be no comment made on individuals to others outside school.

HEALTH & SAFETY DEALING WITH RISKS / HAZARDS

If there are any hazardous areas linked with the visit the teacher must inform the volunteer helper. Providing everyone is alert to the dangers of traffic, machinery, water and other environmental factors there will be no danger associated with a visit. (Otherwise the visit would not occur!) **ALL VISITS ARE RISK ASSESSED.**

Volunteers need therefore to ensure that children are being sensible, keeping together, and listening attentively at all times. If not the child is putting him/herself and others at risk and must therefore be returned to a teacher.

General guidelines include:

- Keep children away from traffic, walking in single file or in twos where necessary.
- Keep children away from any water's edge or cliffs.
- Ask children to keep their hands by their sides or in their pockets if near moving machinery.
- Remind children not to put their fingers in their mouths if they have been touching

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animals.

- Take the first opportunity to allow children to wash hands after touching animals.
- Do not allow children to go off to the toilet on their own, go as a group and wait outside.