



Learning in the Light of Christ

St Thomas' Catholic Primary

Volunteer Policy

Most recent review	September 2020	Next review due	September 2021
Governor Responsible	Local Governing Body	Written by	Claudia Aquilina Headteacher

Covid 19: September 2020 *Under the current government guidelines we do not have volunteers who are working in school. This policy, therefore, needs to be reviewed at a later date when any changes are made to the Government Guidance and Support on schools in the light of the SarsCov2 pandemic.*

The aim of this policy is:

- To provide parents, staff and volunteers with clear expectations, induction and guidelines for working in school.
- To encourage the wider community to engage with children's learning to raise standards of achievement and promote community cohesion.

Volunteers are all adults, including parents and students on work experience, who work alongside the school staff to support children with their learning and development. At St Thomas' we welcome those wishing to help in the school and value the contribution they make to school life. We believe that the involvement of parents, carers and volunteers in children's education is vital and we encourage active participation in many ways. Some volunteers come to school to help with a variety of tasks such as ICT, art, cooking, and especially reading, and usually work with individuals or small groups in specific classes. In addition, volunteers often help when the children are taken on educational visits outside school or get involved with the work of the Parent Teacher Association. These guidelines have been written to ensure that for all concerned – volunteers, teachers and children - the experience is positive and rewarding.

At St Thomas' we have an excellent team of outstanding, experienced staff who are fully committed to working in partnership with families and the local community to ensure that every child in the school benefits from a school environment where all children achieve success in both their learning and personal achievements. We are committed to providing the greatest possible access for all children by providing a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum which is appropriate for

meeting their needs. We particularly want to ensure that parents and pupils are fully participative in the process. Parents, carers and volunteers have a valuable role in helping us to fulfil our aims.

Safeguarding

As part of our commitment to safeguarding, volunteers who are involved in regulated activity with children, will be required to complete an application form (see appendix 1). The Headteacher has the authority not to accept the help of volunteers if he or she believes that it is not in the best interest of the children.

As part of your induction you will be asked to read and sign a declaration that you have understood the following policies:

- a. Part One of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' DfE, (2018)
- b. Safeguarding Policy
- c. Behaviour Policy

You will also be required to:

- a. sign the Volunteer in School Protocol (see appendix 2) and
- b. complete an Emergency Contact Form (see appendix 4)

In order for you to work in school as a volunteer, you will also need to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) online check. We will help you get the process started. Please be assured that all information will be treated in the strictest confidence and that these checks are done only in the best interests and safety of the children. All schools need to hold a register of the DBS checks undertaken. In special circumstances such as if a parent steps in to support a trip at short notice, volunteers or parents without a DBS enhanced check may help out if they have had a clear list 99 check. One of the office staff will contact the relevant agency to obtain this once you have provided them with the necessary information. Those who help out at specific events e.g. the school fair or walking with us to swimming do not need a DBS or List 99 check but must not have unsupervised access to children.

Becoming a Volunteer in School

Once the school has received DBS clearance for a volunteer, they will then be required to attend an induction meeting to cover the following topics:

- a. Safeguarding & Child Protection (attendance at specific Child Protection training is also required within the first half term of your work with the school)
- b. Code of Conduct, including confidentiality
- c. Health & Safety
- d. Fire and Evacuation Procedures

Deployment of Volunteers

Volunteers will be asked to support in classes/areas of the school where there is the most need for support. **Parent volunteers should be aware that they will not always be able to work in their child's class.** This could be for a number of reasons and if this is the case, we may ask you to help in a different class or area of the school. This is entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. It is helpful if you can explain to your child that you will be coming into school to help all of the children and that he/she will not always be able to work with you. We may from time to time ask you to support another class during a visit if extra adults are required for a specific activity (e.g. supporting practical learning). Volunteers do not have to stay for a full morning or afternoon session, even an hour would be appreciated but we do prefer for volunteers to attend on a regular basis to ensure continuity and to aid planning. However, volunteers with a 'special skill' which they could share with/demonstrate to the children on a less frequent basis are also welcome!

Volunteer Roles in School

Many of the activities that we might ask you to help with are the sorts of things that parents do with their own children at home. We might ask you to become involved in a variety of activities such as:

- Sharing books (see appendix 3);
- Working on the computer;
- Playing games;
- Making things;
- Cooking;
- Gardening;
- Sewing;
- Topic related studies;
- Coming with us on visits (see appendix 4);
- Supporting individual children;

- Supporting group work;
- Help with the walk to and from Swimming or other sporting activities.
- Helping with classroom organisation or the preparation of resources;
- Sometimes just being there is what is needed!

The teacher will give you:

- clear guidelines about the activity;
- All the materials you need.

The class teacher may ask you to help with classroom organisation and/or the preparation of resources when they are teaching the whole class. Afterwards it is very helpful if you can feedback to the teacher about how the activity went and how you got on. Please agree with the class teacher how and when this should take place. Please ask if there is anything that you are not sure about or if you need help.

Procedures and Protocols

Health and Safety/Safeguarding

When a volunteer arrives in the school they must sign in the visitor's book which is located at the front office. Please indicate your arrival time and which class/person you will be supporting. Volunteers must also sign out and state the time when they are leaving the school premises. Signing in and out is important in the event of an emergency so that staff and emergency services know who needs to be accounted for.

The Headteacher has the authority to withdraw the help of volunteers if he or she believes that it is not in the best interest of the children.

Safeguarding concerns about a child must be shared immediately with the class teacher and one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) as soon as possible after the disclosure. This must be done in an appropriate setting so that others cannot overhear. They are **Mrs Claudia Aquilina Headteacher; Mr Wil Liddle Year 2 teacher and Mrs Debra Whitehead, Pre School Teacher.** Please go to the office and the office staff will locate a DSL for you.

Confidentiality

It is extremely important that all staff, parent volunteers and other adults working in the school adhere to confidentiality protocols. While in school you are likely to become aware of issues relating to

individual children or groups - you may see children struggling with work, be upset or misbehaving or hear/see other personal information concerning a child. **It is vital that you do not share anything with others, even if you are related to or are friends with another child's parent/carer.** The teachers will decide what needs to be shared and are responsible for informing parents of any concerns about a child within the procedures and protocols of the school. Volunteers working in classrooms do so on the understanding that they support the teaching staff and will not pass opinion on such matters as discipline or teaching styles outside the school. If you ever have any concerns about something in school please refer these to the class teacher or to a member of the Senior Leadership Team if your concern relates to the class teacher. If the concern relates to the Head Teacher then this needs to be referred to the Chair of Governors (whose name and contact details can be obtained from the school website or from the office.)

Guidelines for Supporting Children in School

Class teachers will explain specific class routines and expectations but the following are applicable more generally:

- Always encourage the children to do things for themselves. It is important that they are independent and although some children may need help and supervision, the end result should always be their own work. Please don't be tempted to do the work for them! The learning that goes on while the children are doing an activity is often much more important than the end product!
- There is no rush. We give the children plenty of time to answer a question or to complete a task and they will often need to return to it on several occasions.
- It is vital to encourage the children to talk about what they are doing in order to support them in using the correct vocabulary.
- When playing games with the children, try and encourage the idea of taking turns, sharing and being a good loser. The real joy of a game is the taking part!
- Please don't have favourites - it is important that all children in school are given equal time and attention.
- Please do not lift, carry or move a child in any way.

Housekeeping

Mobile Phones - We would be most grateful if you could keep your mobile phone on silent whilst helping in school, and avoid taking calls/texting whilst supporting the children. Mobile phones should not be used to take photos on school premises.

Tea / Coffee arrangements - If you are in school over the break period, there is tea and coffee making facilities for visitors in the staff room which you are welcome to use. There is no charge for visitors' tea and coffee. Please respect confidentiality by not looking at/for information that is not clearly on display for all to see.

Photocopier / Laminator – There is a photocopier and a laminator in the photocopier room opposite the staff room. You may be asked to use these machines to support the class teacher in preparing resources. Please ask in the school office if you are unsure of how to use them!

First Aid - Please do not administer First Aid to children whilst you are volunteering in school. All school staff can administer basic first aid and a number of staff hold certificates for paediatric first aid and first aid at work. Please talk to the class teacher or a member of support staff working in the class in the first instance if a child hurts themselves.

Fire alarm - If the fire alarm sounds, please make your way safely to the nearest exit, guiding the child you are working with if away from the main class area (e.g. hearing readers in the library). We will provide you with information regarding our evacuation/invacuation as part of your induction.

Attendance - If you find that you are not going to be able to come into school on a particular day, it is really helpful to know in advance, even if that's only a phone message on the morning in question. As a school we will do our utmost to inform you if the class will not be available.

References

Occasionally, volunteers ask the school to provide a written reference when they are seeking employment. We stipulate a minimum qualifying period of three months regular volunteering attendance (e.g. once a week) before we feel able to provide a work-based reference. We believe that this is fair to both prospective employers and candidates.

Thank you!

In case we forget to say so, please be assured that we really do appreciate your help (we may sometimes forget to say so because we are busy, but we do!!). If you have any worries or queries, or any good ideas on how we can improve something, please let the relevant member of staff know - we are always willing to listen.

Appendix 1
School Volunteer Request Form

Volunteer Name:	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Email Address:	
If a parent of a child/ren in the school please give names and classes:	
If you are a student please enter your educational establishment and address:	
Tutor's Name:	Contact Telephone Number:
Which area/s of the school would you prefer to support?	
Do you have any specific skills/strength that could be utilised?	
When are you available to support in school? Please give days and times.	
Have you read the School Volunteer Policy?	
Are you willing to complete an online DBS check?	

Appendix 2
VOLUNTEER IN SCHOOL PROTOCOL

Please read and sign the document below to confirm your agreement with the following school expectations as a volunteer:

As a school we agree to:

- Explain your tasks/jobs carefully so that you are clear about what we would like you to do with the children.
- Share the school behaviour and ethos policy with you to help you understand how we manage behaviour.
- Ensure that the children you work with behave and work well.
- Treat you with the highest respect and care.
- Share relevant information about the children you are working with.
- Let you know in advance the overall plan for the day and let you know if this changes!
- Treat anything you tell us with confidentiality.

We agree not to ask you to:

- Deal with difficult or challenging behaviour.
- Carry out a task that you feel unprepared to complete

Signed:.....Date:

As a volunteer helper I agree to:

- Use the school behaviour policy and inform the teacher if I see any inappropriate behaviour.
- Inform the teacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead if I observe anything that concerns me in school.
- Treat any information with total confidentiality.
- Inform the school if I am unable to come into school for any reason by 9:00am.
- Respect and listen to the guidance of the teacher at all times.
- Complete the appropriate DBS/List 99 safeguarding checks.
- Disclose any criminal allegations to the Headteacher prior to starting as a volunteer helper.

I agree not to:

- Look at or compare children's work, records or staff records.
- Share any information about a child or member of staff with anyone outside the school staff team

Signed:..... Date:

Appendix 3
What does 'sharing books with children' mean?

A few quick pointers to help you when you are asked to read or share a book with a child:

The teacher will indicate whether you should read to the child or the child should read to you. If this is not clear, ask.

If the child appears 'stuck', tell them gently to use their phonics and 'sound it out' or encourage a sensible guess based on what has already been read or look at the illustrations for clues, and if all else fails, tell them the word. Quite often a lack of confidence will inhibit them from making an attempt and their fear of 'getting it wrong' may result in silence.

Encourage the child to predict what might happen next and discuss how they feel about the story and characters.

Make the experience an enjoyable one, sharing your love of books with the child. This is a moment of quality time for you both.

Please do not move the child onto another box from the reading scheme. If a child has done particularly well in their reading, please be sure to share this with the class teacher. Equally, please let the teacher know if any problems.

Appendix 4

Emergency Contact Details

Name of Volunteer: _____

Name of Emergency Contact: _____

Contact Number: _____