

West Exmoor Federation



Policy for Parents/Carers and Voluntary Helpers in School

Reviewed in December 2024

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Points for Staff to Note

We all agree that volunteers in school can make a great difference to our children's learning and wider educational experience. It also gives parents/carers a chance to be involved in the life of our schools. The following points should be followed so that all volunteers are aware of their role and the schools can make maximum benefit of their help for our children.

1. ALL voluntary helpers must undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in order to ensure that the children are protected. A member of our administration team can assist with this process.
2. Voluntary helpers will be given a copy of our guidelines for volunteers, this includes notes about confidentiality and references to our behaviour policy.
3. A register of voluntary helpers is held within our Single Central Register. In this way we can keep track of DBS checks, guidelines etc. It is very important that all staff inform their school administrator of any new volunteer.
4. All volunteers should be reminded to sign in and out of school, and to wear a visitor's badge for the duration of their visit.
5. Staff should take time to explain the learning objectives and outcomes of lessons that volunteers are supporting, so that they feel confident about what they are doing.
6. Volunteers should not be asked to do anything that they are not happy to do. Some parents/carers prefer to help with practical tasks while others do not. Staff should take time to find out what their volunteers are happy doing; it makes the working relationship much more productive and means that they will keep coming back!
7. If a staff member has a concern about a volunteer, in the first instance a quiet word may resolve the issue – usually it is just a case of the volunteer being unsure about their role. For more serious issues, staff should inform their Head of Teaching and Learning or the Executive Headteacher.

Guidance for Volunteers in School

Thank you for volunteering within our schools. We believe that the involvement of volunteers in our children's education is vital and we encourage active participation in many ways. Volunteers come to our schools to help with a variety of tasks such as art, cooking, sewing and reading, and usually work with small groups in specific classes. Other volunteers help when the children are taken on educational visits outside of school or get involved with the work of our PTFAs. The aim of this leaflet is to give you all the information you need to make your time both worthwhile and enjoyable. Thank you for your support – it is very much appreciated by the staff and the children.

Safeguarding

All volunteers are to be initially approved by Jayne Peacock, and then asked to obtain the necessary DBS clearance. All volunteers must read 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' Part 1 before starting to volunteer; this outlines safeguarding procedures. For a variety of Health and Safety reasons, it is very important that we know exactly who is on the school premises and where they are. We therefore ask that every adult who comes into school to do so via reception. At reception you will be able to sign in and out accordingly.

Confidentiality

It is very important that all staff and volunteers working within the federation adhere to our Confidentiality Policy. You may see children struggling with work or hear/see other sensitive information concerning a child whilst you are volunteering. It is vital that you do not share anything about specific children with friends or family or a child's parents, even if you know them socially outside of school. The teachers across the federation have the responsibility of informing parents of any concerns about a child and we need to be assured that you will exercise total discretion in all respects when you are volunteering in school. Volunteers working in classrooms should do so on the understanding they support the teaching staff and will not pass opinion on such matters as discipline or teaching styles. It is important to remember that federation staff have holistic information and understanding regarding the children in their care and that any interference, no matter how well intended, must be avoided.

Housekeeping

There are tea and coffee making facilities for volunteers within the staffrooms at Lynton, Parracombe and Kentisbury. You are welcome to use these facilities and there is no charge for volunteers. However, please be aware that meetings are often held in the staffrooms. Please do not enter the staffroom if there is a meeting taking place; if in doubt, knock and ask.

Please do:

- Create an atmosphere that makes the children you are working with want to learn. Enthusiasm and encouragement are extremely important in helping with development;
- Encourage our children to do things for themselves. It is important that they are independent and although they may need help and supervision the end result should always be their own work. Remember that the learning which goes on whilst the children are engaged in an activity is often much more important than the end product;
- Encourage the children to talk about what they are doing in order to support them in using the correct vocabulary;
- Encourage children to take turns, share and be a good loser when playing games. The real joy of a game is the taking part;
- Praise children verbally for good behaviour;
- Ensure that you are clear about your responsibilities and your role as a volunteer. Teachers work hard to plan lessons and direct learning in advance. If you are unsure of the purpose of the activity you have been asked to assist with, please clarify it with the teacher or teaching assistant at the start of the session;
- Enjoy your time with the children; your enthusiasm will directly impact upon them.

Please don't:

- Lift, carry or physically move a child in any way;
- Shout at, hit or threaten to manhandle a child;
- Have favourites – it is important that all children in school are given equal time and attention;
- Tell a child off. The federation has a relational learning policy which children are expected to follow. As a volunteer you are not expected to discipline children. If a child is disrupting an activity that you are supporting, please give them one verbal warning. If they continue to be disruptive, please tell a member of staff straight away;
- Confuse your role as a volunteer with that of being a parent (if appropriate). You should not disrupt the learning of your children, or the other children in the class, by entering their classrooms and interacting with them during normal lesson time;
- Hold conversations deemed to be inappropriate for children to hear on school premises.

Helpful Advice:

- If a child does or tells you something that causes you concern, please tell the class teacher you are working with, the school's Head of Teaching and Learning or the Executive Headteacher, as soon as possible after the event. Please ensure that this is done in an appropriate setting so that others cannot overhear;
- We expect all members of the federation community to be polite, courteous and self-disciplined. The children watch us and follow our example;
- Volunteering in a school that contains your own child will give you an insight into his or her education. Should you have any questions that arise out of this, please direct them to your child's class teacher privately on a separate occasion, through parent consultation evening or through the other channels that already exist within the school – popping in during the course of the day whilst volunteering is not appropriate;
- Please remember that you are volunteering within a professional environment and behave accordingly.

Finally

In case we forget to say so, please be assured that we really do appreciate your help. If you have any worries or queries, or ideas that would benefit the children of the federation, please do not hesitate to take them to the Head of Teaching and Learning of the school that you volunteer within or the Executive Headteacher, Jayne Peacock.