



Volunteers Handbook and Guidance

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at our school. We appreciate the help that all our volunteers give in supporting the work of the school.

We want you to enjoy your time with us, and we have produced this guide to make sure you feel comfortable, supported and appreciated. There is a lot of information here, but please don't hesitate to ask questions if you are unsure about anything!

We foster a strong community spirit, a committed sense of belonging and high expectations of our pupils. Children learn that positive actions, commitment and involvement are highly rewarded. School rules are clear and consistently applied.

Our core values:

- We love
- We believe
- We aspire
- We respect
- We are responsible

We teach and insist upon:

- Use of "please" and "thank you".
- Regular greetings of "good morning" and "good afternoon" etc.
- Not interrupting a speaker.
- Holding doors open.

Our Commitment to You

As one of our valued volunteers, we are committed to giving you the following:

- A friendly and supportive working environment.
- Enthusiastic and cooperative children.
- A staff member to support you in your volunteering.
- Recognition for the work that you do and its impact on learning.
- A reference if you apply for paid work here or elsewhere.

Your Commitment to Us

We are well aware that your time and energies are given freely and willingly. Most volunteers work in school at a set time each week, and if you can commit to this for at least half a term, we would find this helpful. However, we do not insist that you commit to working for a fixed or indefinite period of time, or give notice when you wish to stop volunteering at Surrey Hills. However, we do ask that you agree to and abide by the guidance found in this handbook and the volunteer policy and code of conduct.

Your volunteering is valuable to the school and the class teacher may have been counting on you to help with an activity. Just give us a call as soon as you know you cannot come. In addition, when you do wish to cease volunteering, please communicate this to the school.

Key Contacts

Your main point of contact for the first few weeks will be the class teacher. They will help you settle into your volunteering, and will provide you as much support as you need to get started.

While you are volunteering at Surrey Hills, your other contacts will be:

- The school administrators, who are Sarah Tudor, Mandy Greenwood and Trudy Cranfield.
- The Head Teacher, Mr Simon Coles.
- The senior leadership team, who are Hanna Garrick (Assistant Headteacher) and Sam Sawyer (Assistant Headteacher and Inclusion Leader).

Signing In and Out

It is important for security and fire regulations that all volunteers working in the school can be identified and located at all times. We ask you to follow this simple routine every time you visit the school:

- Only enter the school via the front entrance.
- Sign the visitors' book and make sure you are wearing your visitors badge at all times.
- Find your class teacher link to let them know you have arrived, and to tell them where you will be working.
- When you have finished, please return your badge to the office and sign out.

Where can I...?

This section is designed to answer some of the common questions new volunteers ask. If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Where can I park?

Unfortunately there is no parking at either site. If you cannot avoid driving we suggest you park at: Westcott - Westcott Sports Club car park (access from Milton Street), which is a short walk to the school or in the village.

Abinger – the car park opposite the entrance to the school site.

If you cycle, there are cycle racks at each site.

Where can I leave my belongings?

It's not a good idea to bring too many personal belongings and valuables to school with you. However, your class teacher will let you know where you can leave your coat and bag, etc. For safeguarding reasons, your mobile phone should be handed into the school office.

Where can I work?

The class teacher with whom you are working with will give you a suitable space to work in.

Where can I go?

Most of the time, you will be working in your class teacher's classroom or shared spaces. If you need to visit other classrooms (for example, to collect children for reading), please be as discreet as possible while lessons are taking place. At break times we want you to feel relaxed and comfortable and therefore you are welcome to use the staff room for somewhere to sit. There are tea and coffee making facilities in here, so make yourself a drink!

Where can I go to the toilet?

There are staff toilets located near the library and also near the staff room which you are welcome to use, but please do not use the children's toilets.

Working with Children

Whether you have previous experience of working with children or not, here are some guidelines to help you be successful in your voluntary work.

- Be friendly and encouraging with the children, especially when working with them for the first time.
- Expect them to be a little nervous – introduce yourself and explain that you will be helping them with their reading/spelling etc.
- Remember that though we need to be friendly, we are not making friendships, and it is important that the children give the same amount of respect as other adults in the school. Expect children to use your 'grown up' name, e.g. Mrs Smith.
- Our children are usually enthusiastic and cooperative. You are not responsible for managing their behaviour beyond making a reasonable attempt to help the child focus on their task. Be positive and clear in your explanations, and remember you are not there to negotiate about what the children have to do.
- If a child is overenthusiastic and disruptive, ask them politely to settle down to help them and others concentrate. If a child is not engaging at all with their work, remind them of the purpose of the activity and that you are there to help them.
- If your reasonable attempts to help the child engage with their task are not working, use a final reminder, e.g. 'If you can't settle down you will have to go back to see your teacher'.
- Please don't get into arguments with the children, make threats or issue punishments. If you have any concerns at all, go and get help from a member of staff immediately.
- The children know you are not a teacher, so don't feel embarrassed or disappointed if you need to seek extra support. It's better not to march the child into the classroom and explain in front of all the other children what they were doing wrong! Simply ask the child to return to class and explain to their teacher why they have been sent back. You should check later on that they did so.
- When you have finished working with a child it is good to reflect on how the activity has gone. Praise the children when they have done well with their learning and attitude; when they haven't use phrases like 'Next week you should think about...' and 'I think it would help your learning if...' rather than telling the children off.
- Remember that the children are always watching – it's good to let them see you interacting respectfully and cooperatively with other adults in the school.
- For more information you can read the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policy. If you are apprehensive about this area, the best advice is to watch the class teacher or other adults working with children, even for the first few weeks. If it just isn't working with a particular child or group, don't be ashamed to let someone know.

Training and Development

Your voluntary work is important to us – so we want to help you do it to the best of your ability.

Induction

Whatever tasks you volunteer to do, we will offer you a simple induction session where you will be given information to take away and look at (e.g. school policies). We will also tell you about the work we would like you to do and give you basic information about the school and staff.

Training and Development (continued)

Further Training

For some jobs you might like to consider more formal training for which you gain certificates or accreditation. This could be especially valuable to you if you want to learn new skills to use in our school or elsewhere.

Many volunteers find that they would like to work as Learning Support Assistants (or even as teachers) in the future. While we can't promise to employ any of our volunteers, we can advise you about how you might achieve your goals.

Health and Safety

You must comply with the school's health and safety policy (available on the school's website), observing any specific requirements whilst volunteering. Do not take part in, or ask anyone else to take part in, any action that might cause you or another person to be put at risk of injury or harm. You should always advise a member of the Senior Leadership Team of any potential hazard or situation that you feel puts people at risk. They will then report this as necessary.

Equal Opportunities

At our school we do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, ethnic background, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, history of illness, non-relevant criminal records or your marital, employment, financial or social status. As a volunteer you must treat people with respect at all times and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination, abuse, harassment or bullying in your dealing with children, colleagues or others at the school. If you feel that you have been unfairly discriminated against please discuss this with the Head Teacher. You can also contact your local volunteer centre or Volunteer Bureau listed in the local telephone directory. Our equality policy is available on the school website.

Child Protection

Because of the school's duty of care to all pupils and adults in the school, we must ensure that your volunteering does not put anyone at risk. For more information see our child protection leaflet, included in your induction pack. The school's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) are Mrs Sawyer, Mrs Lewis and Mr Coles. It is possible that children may tell you (or try to tell you) things relating to some form of abuse. If this happens, let your class teacher know immediately, and allow them to deal with it. While you cannot promise confidentiality within school (i.e. you must make it clear to the child that you'll have to tell someone), you must ensure that once you have passed the matter on you do not discuss it with anyone else. If you are in any doubt about the safety of a child, immediately tell the Head Teacher.

Checks

The first stage of this is the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, which should be completed before you volunteer in school. In exceptional circumstances, the type of work you will be allowed to undertake may be restricted, if there is some relevant reason that makes some tasks inappropriate (e.g. certain criminal convictions, personal health issues etc.). If this is the case, we will always explain our reasons, and trust that you will appreciate how important our responsibility for child protection is.

Safe Practice

To protect the children you are helping and yourself from any false accusation, follow these simple steps:

- only work in public areas such as classrooms and corridors;
- try to work close to where other volunteers or staff members are working;
- avoid any physical contact with the children;
- try to ensure that your conversation with children is friendly but not over-familiar;
- never accompany children into the toilets;
- do not take photographs or videos of the children using your own mobile phone/personal technology.

Confidentiality

The information we hold about you and your volunteering is confidential, and as such, will not be shared with any third parties without your express consent. We ask that you respect the confidentiality of staff and pupils at Surrey Hills All Saints by not discussing things you have seen and heard while volunteering, especially when sensitive information about pupils is involved. We have a confidentiality policy which you can read, if you require more information.

Expenses

It is not expected that you will incur any expenses but should you feel that you have done so please speak to the class teacher.

Insurance

You will be insured for the same activities as teachers. As long as you follow the guidelines in this booklet and in the relevant policies you will be covered by the school's insurance for most occurrences.

Dealing with Problems

Though we expect your experience of voluntary work at Surrey Hills All Saints to be very enjoyable and rewarding, it is possible that some problems may occur. Lines of communication are always open, and we would much rather hear about things quickly, so that they can be resolved quickly. Here are some of the possible problems, with possible solutions.

I'm in conflict

Some activities might bring volunteers into conflict with paid employees, who feel their toes are being stepped on. Alternatively, you may find you disagree with other volunteers about how work is being carried out. If this occurs and you haven't been able to resolve it between yourselves, please speak to someone outside the situation.

I'm in the wrong job

You may have volunteered for something which has turned out to be unsuitable. It may be that you need further training and support, or could move to a different task. Or it may be that you just need time to get used to what you're doing. Just talk to your class teacher if you are feeling like this.

I'm not getting on with the children

Working with children is never easy, and even the professionals can find it challenging to build good working relationships with the children. Also, it is quite common for volunteers to find it difficult working with a particular age group, and it's easy enough to move to another team. Give yourself some time, and remember you can always watch other volunteers at work, to see how they handle particular situations.

I'm no good at this

It's common when taking on a new challenge like volunteering in school to feel daunted, and to find things difficult at first. If you feel you really can't do it, you aren't the first, and won't be the last. Talk to your class teacher, and do as many tasks as possible together – it's what they're there for. Be patient with yourself and persevere – you may be surprised how good a volunteer you will become.

I'm bored

If you've been hearing readers for a while, you may be fed up with the Biff and Chip books. Talk to your class teacher about what else you might do. There are also some ideas on the next page about how you can take your volunteering further.

Dealing with Problems (continued)

I'm not appreciated

If no-one has said thank you to you for a while, it can be disheartening; if you spent three hours tidying the library only to find it a tip the next day, it can be infuriating. Please tell someone if it's getting to you – the last thing we want is for our volunteers to feel undervalued, because it's really not true.

I'm too busy this week

We understand that time is often short, and we appreciate that sometimes you will not be able to come in and help. If so, please let the school know as soon as possible. If you find that clashes are happening regularly, you may wish to review the situation with your class teacher and try to find a better time.

I'm leaving

Everyone gets to the point where, for whatever reason, they have to stop volunteering at Surrey Hills. We understand this, and don't put any pressure on you to carry on. All we ask is that you let us know when and why you are leaving, so we can thank you properly.

Taking it Further

By simply volunteering at Surrey Hills All Saints you are already making an excellent contribution. We would never expect you to give any more time and energy than you do, but if you feel really keen to be involved in the life of the school, here are some other ideas:

F@SH

We have a very active and effective Parent Teacher Association, but they could always use more help whether it's helping at a disco, going to meetings or running a stall at the Christmas Fair, there's lots you can do. Please see the F@SH section of our website for more details.

Governors

The governors are responsible for overseeing the running of the school, and being a parent governor is an excellent way to contribute to this aspect of school life. It is also one way of parents' and carers' voices being heard. If you are not a parent at the school, we also sometimes have vacancies for community and LA governors. Please contact the Chair of Governors via the school office if you are interested in this area.

And Finally...

Your induction training is now complete and you're ready to get started! We would like to thank you again for volunteering at our school. We hope you will enjoy being part of our team, and have a happy and fulfilling time with us.