

# Withycombe Raleigh C of E Primary School

## Volunteer Handbook

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## Welcome to Withycombe Raleigh C of E Primary School

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!

### Our School Aims

The national Every Child Matters Strategy focuses on achieving five key outcomes for children. Its aim is for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

Be healthy	make informed choices about being healthy and staying safe thrive in a safe and happy learning environment
Stay safe	
Enjoy and achieve	engage with a vibrant curriculum and fulfil their capacity to learn
Make a positive contribution	become self-confident, informed and active citizens will treat each other with respect
Achieve economic well-being	be equipped to cope with change and engage with the world around them

### From the Headteacher

We often talk about "the Withycombe family" and I am very pleased that you have chosen to play an active part in it. We all work hard to make Withycombe Raleigh a place where children thrive in an exciting learning environment and our volunteers play an important part in this. I hope you find your work at Withycombe Raleigh as stimulating and rewarding as we do. I would like to thank you for giving up your time to support our children.

### 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 Volunteer Co-ordinator to support you in your volunteering;
- training opportunities to help you fulfil and/or expand your role;
- an opportunity to contribute to decisions about how volunteering in the school is managed;
- recognition for the work that you do and its impact on learning;
- reimbursement for expenses occurred as part of your volunteering (see p11 for more details);
- 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 Withycombe Raleigh. However, we do ask that you agree to and abide by the guidance found in this Handbook.

We would also ask that you let us know if you have made an arrangement that you later find you cannot keep. Your work is valuable to the school and staff 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 Volunteer Co-ordinator.

## **Key Contacts**

When you start volunteering for us you will be advised who your main point of contact for the first few weeks will be and they will provide you as much support as you need to get started.

You will also meet other members of staff and volunteers. A list of key contacts can be found at Appendix A.

## **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 collect a visitors badge;
- find your link staff member to let them know you have arrived, and to tell them where you will be working;
- when you have finished, please return 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, do ask your mentor.

### Where can I park?

If you do drive to school, please park on the road. The staff car park is well used, and also provides fire access to the playground areas. If you cycle, there are cycle racks available in the visitor car park and also in the playground.

### 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, you will be advised when you start where you can leave your coat and bag, etc.

### Where can I work?

Many volunteers work in the classrooms. Each teaching team has its own space and designated areas in the school and you will be advised where these are when you start.

### Where can I go?

Most of the time, you will be working in your link staff member's classroom or designated areas in the School. Teaching staff will direct you to specific tasks and areas to work in. 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 and refreshments. You may prefer use the playground to get a breath of fresh air, or alternatively you could sit quietly in the classroom where you have been based.

### Where can I go to the toilet?

There are toilets by the staff room which you are welcome to use, but please do not use the disabled or 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 although 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, eg, 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 silly, 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, eg, '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 done so well 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 policy. If you are apprehensive about this area, the best advice is to watch your mentor 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 (eg, 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.

### In-School Training

Our school values the work of volunteers and recognises that training can sometimes be helpful. Not only does training help you to help us, it can also mean that you learn useful new skills. We want to offer all our volunteers training if they think it would be helpful for them to carry out their duties in the school. We aim to run a range of sessions for volunteers during the year, covering various aspects of education. Most training will be very informal, and though you will not be required to attend we do encourage you to make the most of these opportunities.

### 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 Teaching Assistants or 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, and may be able to provide full or partial funding.

## Team Meetings

From time to time, you will be invited to meetings with the Volunteer Co-ordinator to talk about how the voluntary work is going. This is an opportunity to air concerns, celebrate success, and catch up with other volunteers.

## Appraisals

From time to time your link staff member will discuss your work with you. They will want to know if you have any queries or concerns, whether you are satisfied with your role or if you would like more training for the tasks that you do. You can also, at any time, contact the Volunteer Coordinator to discuss any aspect of your work in the school.

## **Health and Safety**

You must comply with the school's Health and Safety Policy (available from the office), 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 the school's Health and Safety Co-ordinator of any potential hazard or situation that you feel puts people at risk.

## **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 Volunteer Coordinator or Headteacher. You can also contact your local volunteer centre or Volunteer Bureau listed in the local telephone directory. Our equal opportunities policy is available from the office.

## **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 Policy. Please refer to the Key Contacts Appendix for details of the school's designated Child Protection Officer.

## Checks

All volunteers will be asked to complete and School Volunteer Application and a DBS check. We may also take up references if you are not known by or connected to the 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 (eg, 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.

## Disclosures

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 link staff member 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.

## 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.

## **Expenses**

It is important to us that you are reimbursed for any expenses that you incur as a result of your volunteering. Examples include materials purchased for work in school. Please follow the following steps whenever you spend money on your volunteering:

- agree in advance with your link staff member what you will buy, what it will cost, and who will eventually pay for it;
- get a requisition form from the office, and get it signed by the Volunteer Coordinator before a purchase is made. You should indicate on the form whether you will be donating your expenses to the school (i.e. not claiming for them) or claiming them from the relevant school budget;
- make your purchase and get a VAT receipt;
- return the claim form and receipt to the office.

It is important that this procedure is followed even if you are donating the expenses, as we need to keep a track of what is being spent and by whom. If you have any further questions about expenses, please speak to the Volunteer Coordinator.

## **Insurance**

You will be insured for the same activities as teachers. The school's policy is available for you to see. Please read it and ask the teacher if you are unsure about anything. 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. If you use your own vehicle to transport children other than your own on school activities you need to check your insurance policy. If you drive a vehicle that is affiliated to the school, the school's own policy protects you against claims from other people and for yourself.

## **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 Withycombe Raleigh 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.

## **Dealing with Problems**

Though we expect your experience of voluntary work at Withycombe Raleigh 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. For example, if you have fallen out with your mentor, speak to your link staff member, and vice versa.

### I'm in danger

Some work may expose you to unnecessary risks, such as being left alone with children, or leave you feeling uncomfortable or under moral pressure. If you feel at risk you need get yourself out of the situation and let someone know immediately.

### 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 mentor or your link staff member 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 mentor, 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 eventually be.

### I'm having trouble with my own child

Sometimes, when mum or dad comes to help in the class, their own child can react badly. This may take the form of being extra clingy and jealously guarding their parent, or being over enthusiastic about it. Talk to your child, and explain that you're there to help all the children. If it isn't working, talk to your link staff member about whether you'd be better off helping in another class.

### I'm bored

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

### 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, and either make up the time later in the week or come in the following week. If you find that clashes are happening regularly, you may wish to review the situation with your team leader and try to find a better time.

### I'm leaving

Everyone gets to the point where, for whatever reason, that have to stop volunteering at Withycombe Raleigh. 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 Withycombe Raleigh 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:

### PTFA

We have a very active and effective PTFA, but they could always use more help. Whether it's helping at a cake sale, going to meetings or running a stall at the Summer Fayre, there's lots you can do. Please see the PTFA noticeboard for more details.

### Governors

Occasionally there is a vacancy for a parent governor. 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, as the parent governors are given time at each meeting to give any feedback they have heard in the playground. If you are not a parent at the school, we also sometimes have vacancies for community and LEA governors. Please contact the Clerk to the Governors via the school office if you are interested in this area.

And Finally...

We hope you will enjoy being part of our team, and have a happy and fulfilling time with us.

**KEY CONTACTS**

Headteacher	Mr Steve Powley
Deputy Headteacher	Mrs E Jones
Assistant Headteacher:	Mrs Kathryn Lee
Volunteer Co-ordinator:	Mr Paul Carter
Health and Safety Co-ordinator:	Mr Steve Powley Mrs Amanda Pope Mr John Gorman Mrs Kathryn Lee (First Aiders)
First Aiders:	Mrs Suzanne Williams Mrs Caroline Sansom Mrs Kathryn Lee Mrs Emma Jones Mrs Louise Jones Mrs Louise Froggatt Mrs Andrea Bower Mrs Emma Hartley Mrs Caroline Foster Mrs Fran Chard Mr Sam Scudder Mr Richard Ralph (Breakfast Club) Mr John Gorman (Site Manager)  <u>Paediatric First Aiders</u> Mrs Linda Ward Mrs Jane Farrow Carmaine Asselman
Child Protection Officer:	Mrs Emma Jones
Administrators:	Mrs Amanda Pope Mrs Maria Fraser-Roe Mrs Nicola Hart