

# St. Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School



## Handbook for Volunteers

## **Introduction**

At St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary, we have two types of volunteers: one off volunteers for activities such as helping on trips and driving children to events, and regular volunteers who commit to helping at school on a regular basis such as readers or those willing to share their skills and expertise supporting the school.

This booklet is a guide for those friends of our school community who are kind enough to volunteer to help. The whole staff values your contribution to the children's learning and appreciates what you do.

## **Safeguarding**

At St. Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary, we ensure that children's safety and well-being is a high priority. It is our aim that children and adults always have someone to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Our designated Safeguarding Leads are:

Mrs Catherine Hughes – Headteacher  
Mrs Wendy Burns – Safeguarding Lead and SENCo

If you have any concerns about the well-being or safety of any of our pupils, please contact one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads above using this address: [w.burns@st-marymagdalens.richmond.sch.uk](mailto:w.burns@st-marymagdalens.richmond.sch.uk)

All volunteers should read carefully the Safeguarding and Health & Safety information provided when you sign in.

## **Safeguarding Training**

Before new regular volunteers can begin volunteering, and to ensure that new regular volunteers are kept up to date with current safeguarding policies, training will be provided. There is no requirement for one off volunteers to complete safeguarding training.

## **DBS Disclosure**

To ensure the safeguarding and welfare of all our children here at St Mary Magdalen's we will carry out a full enhanced DBS disclosure on any adult volunteering in school regularly who may be working alone with a group or child. These procedures will help us to identify anyone unsuitable to work with children. It is our policy that we can only accept DBS checks that have been issued by St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary.

## **Health and Safety**

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 the school does so via the main entrance. Helpers must first report to the office and sign in.

For your own protection/safety we ask that adult helpers do not enter the classroom unless the class teacher is present. Under no circumstances should you be alone with a child without the specific permission of the class teacher, Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher.

Whilst helping in school you will be covered by the St Mary Magdalen's Catholic School insurance policies for accident and third-party risks etc.

Please read the Fire Alarm Procedures which are displayed in each classroom.

## **Confidential Information**

While volunteering you may occasionally become aware of information about children which is confidential or private to the child or their family. This is a delicate matter that requires a great deal of tact on the part of volunteers. Any conversation with parents or others related to such information is a breach of the pupils' and the school's confidence. Even a comment such as, 'Your son Tommy reads very well,' is not appropriate, as others may wonder why you have not said that to them.

It is very important you treat anything you hear or see in school as being in absolute confidence and entirely a matter within the school. Any information that leads you to believe a child is at risk should be mentioned to the Headteacher, Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Headteacher.

Similarly, you may find that parents who are friends will ask about the progress or behaviour of their children in school. Again, it is very important that you suggest that if they are worried in any way about their child then they must discuss the matter with the class teacher.

Although it is pleasant to work with your own children this can have a detrimental effect on their attitude and concentration, and you may be asked not to do so. Equally, you may not want to work with your own child. The Headteacher reserves the right to make this decision.

There are lots of ways you can help in school. What you will do depends on what is needed at the time and on your own interests and skills. Whatever you do, you will get as much information and guidance as possible. If you are not sure what the teacher would like you to do when you arrive, please do ask. When you work with children at school, you will always be under the supervision of one of the teachers, who will let you know what they would like you - and the children - to do. If you have specific skills which could be used in school, please let the teacher know and he/she will try and use your time and skills in the most productive way possible.

Each activity or task that children are engaged in has a clear purpose and it is important that you understand what this is if the children are to benefit from it. Do not hesitate to ask if you are not clear about what is expected.

## **Supervising the children**

Like all other adults in school, you should have high expectations of children's behaviour. The children should be courteous, use polite language and listen when others are speaking. Encourage them by praise and by setting a good example. If any child misbehaves, please make sure that the teacher knows about it. The aim is that everyone shows each other care and consideration and the importance of the school's values, rules and behaviour code are constantly promoted in assemblies and classrooms. Below are some ways you can help reinforce good behaviour:

- Always treat children with respect and in the same sort of way that you would expect them to treat you. They should refer to you as Mr or Mrs even if they know you outside school.
- Be friendly towards them and praise the children wherever possible.
- Model behaviour – if the teacher asks the class to stop, show the children what to do.
- Avoid shouting. If you speak normally, they will have to be quiet in order to hear what you are saying.
- Give clear and simple instructions.
- Don't be afraid to quietly and calmly correct a child that is misbehaving but never manhandle the children at any time. If in doubt, speak to the teacher.
- Do not let the children become 'silly' or over-friendly with you. They must learn to behave socially towards adults who are not close friends.
- Encourage them to be polite to one another.
- If you are concerned about a child for any reason, have a word with the class teacher. Do not speak directly to the parents of the child.

## **Reading Volunteers**

One of the tasks that you may be involved in is reading with the children. This is an important but time-consuming task. The exact approach will depend on the reading level of the child.

Beginning readers:

- Children should be aware that you read from left to right, turning the pages that way and reading the lines left to right and top to bottom.
- Read the book together to start with.
- Discuss the pictures and the story.
- Read the book again pointing to each word as you read.

Early readers:

- Ask the child to point to each word as they read it. Discuss the pictures and the story. Read the story together.
- Ask the child to find key words which are repeated several times in the book i.e., 'the', 'up', 'in', etc.
- The children should be aware of full stops and that you need to pause at a full stop and not to run sentences together.

### **Extending reading**

The children are taught to decode words using phonics and you should encourage children to sound words out and blend the sounds to hear the word. When children have decoded all the words in a sentence they should reread it to develop their fluency and understanding.

Try to get the child to read to the end of the sentence and then go back to work out an unknown word. Even with competent readers you should discuss the stories and pictures. Also, you can try to encourage the children to use expression or put on suitable voices.

### **Discussion Questions**

The following are examples of the types of questions to use when discussing a story:

- What was the story about?
- Who was the main character?
- What sort of a person was he?
- Was that a sensible thing to do?
- What should he have done?
- Which part did you like best?
- What would have happened if....?
- How is that character feeling? How can you tell?
- What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?

## **Trip Volunteers**

We are very grateful to parents/ carers who support us when attending trips and events outside of school. Without this support the visits would be unlikely to go ahead. However, there are certain procedures that must be adhered to for the safety and protection of children, parents and staff. We are committed to safeguarding and expect all volunteers to share this commitment.

The following must be maintained in the interest of all:

- Mobile phones and other communications devices such as smart watches, tablets etc. must be kept in silent mode and must not be used (for any purposes) while in sight of the children. If you urgently need to use your phone you must wait until a time when you can step away from the group, ensuring the children are properly supervised and another adult is aware that you are stepping away.
- No photographs of children should be taken unless specifically asked by a member of school staff. These must only be taken using a school camera or iPad.
- Parents/helpers must not be alone with a single child at any point.
- Parents/helpers may be asked to escort children to the toilets. If this happens, you must ensure the children are always in pairs or groups. You should check the toilets thoroughly before allowing the children to enter and ensure the children are supervised, particularly if members of the public are present. You should immediately alert a member of school staff if you have any concerns about the safety/appropriateness of the toilet area and facilities.
- Parents/helpers will not be expected to administer any medicines or first aid; this will be the responsibility of the school team. However, you must familiarise yourself with who the first aiders are in case of an accident.
- While you are on the school trip it is important to remember that you are there to look after all the children in the group and not just your own child. You should not do anything which could be seen to favour one child over any other. You may be asked to supervise a group which does not include your own child; this is at the teacher's discretion.
- All adults must speak kindly and sensitively to all children. We are there to care for and nurture them.
- Cigarettes and e-cigarettes should not be smoked in sight of the children and hot drinks should be in closed containers.

All trip volunteers are required to complete the 'School Trip Volunteers Form' and should also attend a brief meeting with the teacher/s before the trip commences to ensure you have all the necessary information

## **Drivers**

For some sporting events and school trips we may need volunteers to drive children to an event or local venue. In order to fulfil our obligation under Health and Safety law, please complete the 'Volunteer Driver Form'.

In case we forget to say so, we really do appreciate your help. If you have any worries or queries, or any good ideas on how we can improve something, please let us know. All forms can be found on our website.

Many thanks.