



South Tyneside Council



# Volunteer Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Volunteers contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities through a vast range of activities. They bring added value through their skills and life experiences to particular tasks or projects. The school recognises the important role volunteers play in volunteering alongside our employees, supporting services and activities in the Borough. By expanding volunteering within our school we have an opportunity to promote wellbeing, social value and redesign services to be more inclusive, collaborative and accountable to our communities. The school welcomes volunteers and is committed to engaging with them in a way that complements and expands service delivery.

The aim of the Policy is to develop relationships, working collectively and in partnership with community and charitable organisations across the Borough (for example, 'Inspire South Tyneside') to identify a diverse range of suitable volunteering activities that are relevant for both organisations.

The school also supports employees wishing to undertake volunteer work within the Borough or for charitable institutions and will also consider providing support to these organisations (for example training e.g. classroom support, HR) as appropriate.

## Engaging Volunteers

The following section applies to all volunteers performing activities directly for the School.

## 2. Scope and Definition

The School defines a volunteer as;

- A person who donates their time, skills and experience to carry out agreed roles within the school without financial reward.

- Not an employee of the school and there is no legally binding contractual relationship between the school and the volunteer.

### **3. Responsibilities**

#### **School**

- To provide a safe environment for volunteer activities
- Match the time, skills and experience of volunteers to a suitable volunteering opportunity
- To determine and **discuss** the range of activities to be performed by a volunteer
- Provide appropriate supervision, instruction and training to enable the volunteer to safely and effectively perform activities, including assessing for and providing reasonable adjustments
- Provide procedures to effectively administer and support volunteer activities
- Protect children and vulnerable adults
- Offer opportunities for development in requested areas

#### **Volunteer**

- To maintain and uphold the reputation of the school.
- Represent the school positively/appropriately at all times
- To treat all pupils, parents, staff and governors with respect and dignity
- To adhere to the school's policies and procedures and Code of Conduct
- Have a clear understanding of the volunteering roles and responsibilities
- Undertake training as required
- Follow reporting procedures such as sickness, safeguarding etc.

#### **Manager**

- Lead and support the volunteer in their activities
- Provide feedback on performance and effectiveness
- Ensure that adequate induction, training and the use of Personal Protective Equipment, if needed, has been provided.

### **4. Activities**

Volunteer activities do not replace or remove work by employees, but may complement and support work already undertaken.

The activities to be performed, including hours of attendance by the volunteer, must be agreed prior to the start.

A Standard Volunteer Agreement (Appendix 1) has been developed for Head Teachers/managers to use and adapt to their volunteer activity. However care should be taken to ensure all aspects of the agreement are considered fully and not to omit/delete statements which may leave the question of employment status at risk. A 'Checklist for Managers' (Appendix 2) has also been developed for Head Teacher/managers to use.

## **5. Confidentiality**

All Head Teachers/managers must ensure that during induction, volunteers are aware of the school's Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies. Volunteers are expected to treat any information obtained during voluntary placements as confidential and not disclose it to third parties either during or after engaging in voluntary activity. Consideration must be given as to the appropriateness of engaging volunteers into a post where they may be exposed to highly sensitive and confidential information. Volunteers known to families within school will not be placed to work directly with the known student.

Where a volunteer comes into contact with confidential information, this must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone not connected with the volunteering role. If appropriate, volunteers will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. A breach of confidentiality will result in the immediate termination of the agreement.

## **6. Health and Safety**

The school has a duty of care to avoid exposing its volunteers to health and safety risks. All volunteers will be made aware of the Health and Safety Policies and any practical safety concerns as part of their induction. Volunteers are expected to comply with the school's Health and Safety Policies. If a volunteer makes us aware of a pre existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may also be necessary.

## **7. Safeguarding**

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be carried out on any volunteer who in the course of their activity has regular, unsupervised contact with the same group of children or vulnerable adults. A check will also be required for volunteers who care for or deal with the personal affairs of any adult. Further guidance can be found in the school's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures. Volunteers have a safeguarding induction and be made aware of the school's Safeguarding Policies and KCSIE 23 document.

## **8. Expenses**

Volunteers undertaking activities on behalf of the school who incur necessary expenditure can claim reimbursement, but should seek prior agreement from their Head Teacher/manager.

Expenses will be met from the relevant school budget. It is important that any reimbursement is for the exact amount paid by the individual otherwise this could be viewed as payment.

## **9. Equipment**

Where the school provides equipment to a volunteer; the use of the equipment is for the sole use of the volunteer and for the School's activities only. The volunteer must not use any school equipment for personal benefit/use or provide others with the equipment for their benefit/use.

Whilst in possession of school property, the volunteer should treat equipment with care and respect and only use in accordance with the instructions provided or manufacturer's guidance. If the volunteer is unsure of how to operate any aspect of equipment / machinery they must seek guidance from the relevant Head Teacher/manager.

## **10. Complaints**

As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use the School's Resolving Issues at Work Policy. Complaints by volunteers should be raised in the first instance with the Head Teacher/manager and dealt with informally where possible. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully by the Head Teacher/manager, or if the complaint is against the Head Teacher/manager, by the Chair of Governors.

If a complaint is brought against a volunteer, this will be investigated by the relevant Head Teacher/manager. Every attempt will be made to resolve the matter as quickly and informally as possible. If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved, then the volunteer may be told their services are no longer required with immediate effect.

## **11. Termination of Activity**

Where appropriate, the role and placement of the volunteer may be terminated by the Head Teacher/manager without notice. The volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

## **Supporting Employees to Undertake Volunteer Work**

## **12. Volunteering undertaken outside work**

The school supports employees who wish to do volunteer work within the Borough or for charitable institutions. Supporting volunteers helps the school to build relationships with the local community and improve how it is perceived within it. Employees who do voluntary work can use

the skills that they have developed at work to help the community; learn new skills including, for example, leadership qualities; and improve their morale, physical health and work-life balance.

### **13. Types of Volunteering Supported**

The school supports employees who are undertaking community or charitable activities, including:

- community care work;
- Staff undertaking courses directly linked to young people e.g. teaching assistant
- environmental work and conservation projects;
- fundraising for community projects or charities;

The types of volunteering that will be supported are entirely at the discretion of the school.

### **14. Application to Volunteer**

Employees who would like to apply to take part in volunteer activities must first obtain the permission of their Head Teacher/manager and will be subject to the demands of the school.

The arrangements that are made to allow an employee to carry out the volunteering work will depend on the scale and nature of the work. The employee may be:

- given unpaid leave up to a maximum of three days per year in order to carry out work on the project;
- allowed to work flexible hours to enable them to work on the project, subject to approval via the Flexible Working Hours Policy (where applicable)

The Head Teacher/manager, when considering an employee request to take part in volunteer activities, should consider:-

- if the request falls within the types of volunteering supported as outlined in paragraph 13 above
- the impact this may have on the school
- the work patterns of other employees and what would happen during periods of absence
- whether there will be significant difficulties if an employee was absent at a particular time of day and how could these be overcome
- the number of requests across the school and how/if these can be accommodated.

#### 15. **Applications to change working arrangements**

Employees who wish to apply for unpaid leave or work more flexible hours to undertake volunteer activities should apply in writing to the Head Teacher via the appropriate policy (The School's policy for requesting leave or flexible working).

#### 16. **Equality and Diversity**

South Tyneside Council and the Governing Board are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity. An equality check was carried out in November 2018. No equality implications were identified in this policy.

Date approved:	Nov 2023
Date Reviewed:	Nov 2024

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

This agreement does not represent a contract of employment. There is no intention of creating a legally binding relationship; the agreement is to make clear our appreciation of your services and your commitment to the School. In particular, it does not create any obligation on you to volunteer for the School (even if offered) or on the School to provide volunteer activities to you. The School is under no obligation to give reasons for such decisions.

This agreement confirms the relationship between the School and you. We aim to do the best we can to make your volunteer experience a productive and rewarding one.

Epinay School agrees to accept the services of \_\_\_\_\_ beginning on \_\_\_\_\_ within the terms of the volunteer policy; and we commit to the following:

1. To provide adequate information, training and assistance for the volunteer to be able to complete tasks.
2. To ensure satisfactory supervisory support and provide general updates to the volunteer.
3. To respect the skills, dignity and individual needs of the volunteer.
4. To be receptive to any comments from the volunteer regarding ways in which the School might mutually better accomplish our respective tasks.
5. To apply our Equality and Diversity Policy.
6. To provide a safe environment.
7. To have in place adequate insurance to cover volunteers.
8. If a safeguarding issue occurs involving the volunteer, the School has a legal duty to refer this information to the appropriate authorities, e.g. Local Authority Designated Officer, Police or the Disclosure & Barring Service.

### **The Volunteer**

Agrees to act as a volunteer and commit to the following:

1. To perform my volunteer duties to the best of my ability and adhere to the School's policies and procedures.
2. To understand the volunteer placement is unpaid and I will not accrue holiday or sick pay.
3. To meet time and duty commitments as agreed with my supervisor, or to provide adequate notice so that alternative arrangements can be made.
4. To keep confidential information obtained while volunteering in line with the School's Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies
5. Not to use any equipment on which I have not received training and adhere to any health & safety rules.
6. Where possible give adequate notice to the School of my intention to cease volunteering.
7. To disclose to the School any issue which may affect my ability to volunteer as soon as possible, e.g. conviction of a criminal offence or safeguarding issue.
8. To understand that if safeguarding issue occurs involving me that the School has a legal duty to refer this information to the appropriate authorities, e.g. Local Authority Designated Officer, Police or the Disclosure & Barring Service.

**Agreed:**

Volunteer:

On behalf of Epinay School:

Date:

This agreement is binding in honour only; it is not intended to be a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either of the parties.

I have read, understood and agree to adhere to the Volunteer Policy and Procedure.



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Checklist for Head Teachers/Managers**

#### **DO ....**

- ensure that volunteers have a clear understanding of what is expected of them
- ensure that volunteers are clear of the School's values and purpose and adhere to these at all times
- ensure that if employees and volunteers are working together, they are aware of the differences between their roles and status. Generally, volunteer roles are those that:
  - do not require the volunteer to follow a consistent, full-time schedule;
  - are required on an "as needed" basis throughout the year, versus a fixed number of hours on a regular basis;
  - vary depending on the programmes and services (e.g. special events, seasonal work, etc.)
- ensure that volunteers are equipped with appropriate reference material to comply with the School's specific policies and procedures and that there is an understanding of the detail in order to comply with them
- ensure that all volunteers have a Volunteer Agreement (Appendix 1) prior to starting agreed activities
- support volunteers to ensure they are properly introduced to their role and provide ongoing support and training appropriate to their individual needs, abilities and skills.
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of all volunteers has been considered and adequate insurance, risk assessments and safeguarding are in place both prior to starting activities and throughout the volunteering role.
- ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place where appropriate, and that they are 'reasonable' to the activity and effort given and received. The School needs to ensure that we are adopting an inclusive approach to volunteers and adhering to the Equality Act.
- ensure that Volunteers are aware of how to raise concerns and how they will be handled.
- ensure reimbursement of agreed expenses is timely and appropriate

#### **DO NOT.....**

- pay or offer to pay for volunteers – the definition of volunteer is grounded in the idea of service without pay. Keep in mind that paying your volunteers could have negative consequences for example exposure to wage and employment claims and have negative consequences to your volunteers and paid employees

- offer benefits tied to hours of work. Paying volunteers in accordance with their hours of work may be regarded as a “substitute for compensation” and inadvertently convert volunteers to employees.
- displace any employees with volunteers
- disclose confidential / unnecessary information to volunteers putting them in a position which may be a conflict of interest
- offer volunteers terms and conditions equivalent to employees