

Ashgrove Primary School

Policy for
Volunteers
in School

9 April 2008
Version 1:2

Policy for Volunteers in School

Rationale

When children are enrolled at Ashgrove Primary School, teachers and parents become partners in their care and education. Through complementary roles, mutual support and open communication the bond between home, community and school can greatly enrich a child's general progress and experience of Ashgrove.

In addition to providing ongoing assistance with homework, uniform, etc. parents and friends are encouraged to become actively involved in the life of the school in many ways, for example, as librarians, as demonstrators, as interviewees, as members of the PTA or as helpers on educational visits. It is our hope that such involvement is enjoyable for the volunteers as well as useful to the children and staff.

Without wishing to dissuade or offend those who are enthusiastic and generous with their commitment to school, it is important that we follow procedures that will give confidence to children, parents and staff and to the volunteers themselves.

This policy has been written to comply with Department of Education (DENI) Circular 1999/10 (Appendix 11), DENI Circular 2008/03 and North-Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) training 2004 "to ensure that children are not placed at risk through allowing the unsupervised and unmanaged access of unsuitable adults to the school."

Ashgrove Primary School uses DENI's definition that "a volunteer is an individual who, subject to the satisfactory completion of the procedures set out below, either (i) assumes unpaid duties in a school on a regular basis on more than two occasions or (ii) is engaged by the school to accompany or assist in school visits or trips; summer activity schemes or residential activities; or to undertake coaching in sports activities."

Recruitment of Volunteers

There are many opportunities for people to become involved with school and individuals may wish to be generally available, or to offer their assistance with a particular age group or task.

Some children are not ready to have their parents assisting the teacher in their own classroom as it may be difficult to adjust to a different relationship. In these cases, it is better for the parent to volunteer to work in another area of the school.

All volunteers follow the same procedures and a list is held in school of those people who:

- have applied to be volunteers;
- who have completed the necessary paperwork (see appendices); and
- who have been vetted by DENI, NEELB and AccessNI criminal records procedures.

People are encouraged to volunteer at any time and application forms are readily available from the office, through any member of staff. Parents or friends of the school may be asked to help when a particular need arises but an appeal for volunteers is made annually to allow time for clearance by NEELB.

Code of Conduct

While helping in school, volunteers are entitled to be treated with the respect and in a manner appropriate to a member of staff. Children are told to refer to volunteers as Mr, Ms or Mrs rather than by first names. To this end, volunteers will be issued with badges that identify them as volunteers at Ashgrove Primary School.

As semi-professionals, volunteers at Ashgrove are expected to:

- demonstrate their support for education and give their full attention to the task in hand;

(For this reason volunteers should not bring children with them to school unless as part of the group with which they are working. Parents who volunteer outside school hours may at times find it necessary to bring siblings to school. At these times, those children must be under the parents' direct supervision. The parents are responsible for their own children's safety and must keep the children with them at all times.)

- treat what they see and hear in school as confidential;

(Working with other people's children is a privilege with responsibilities. Children observed in the classroom or the school should not be discussed outside, even with that child's parents. Questions relating to individual children should be addressed to the child's teacher or the principal.

Volunteers would not normally have access to children's records. An exception might be relevant medical information.)

- arrive on time and be ready to start the agreed task;

(Ashgrove relies on volunteers to support much that is important in the life of the school and its children. It is important that volunteers are available for the duration of the task. If they must cancel, the volunteer is asked to call the office as soon as possible to allow time to find a replacement.)

- leave all matters of discipline to the teacher with responsibility.

(Volunteers may address behaviour or safety issues if the teacher is temporarily unavailable. The volunteer should inform the teacher as soon as possible.)

- accept direction and supervision;

(Volunteers are not intended to take the place of staff but to provide assistance and enrichment. They should be consistent with the teacher in supporting the school's

ethos and behaviour. Volunteers should, therefore, agree to operate under the direction of Ashgrove staff.)

- clearly communicate interests and expectations;
- present a positive role model;

(Volunteers should be patient, flexible, appreciative, respectful, and considerate, particularly in their dealings with children.)

- adhere to the school's health and safety policy;
- adhere to the school's pastoral care and child protection policies;
- adhere to the school's safe handling and reasonable force policy;
- dress in a manner that is appropriate for professional working in a primary school;
- refrain from inappropriate language or topics of conversation;
- adhere to the school's smoking policy; and
- switch off mobile phones inside the school building or any venue for an educational visit.

(Arrangements can be made to deal with any essential call.)

Volunteers' Rights

School volunteers have the right to:

- be recognized for their valuable contributions to the educational experience of our children.
- be assigned worthwhile tasks;
- access any school policies and procedures that are relevant to their roles;
- any training or supervision that is necessary for the success of their activities; and
- deal with any complaint through the school's formal general complaints procedure.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.