

Kentmere Academy and Nursery

Volunteer's policy



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1 Introduction

The aim of the document is to provide some general guidance to schools staff who are considering using volunteers to carry out work or tasks on their premises. Volunteers can be very helpful, provided the work they carry out does not create risks to themselves or others. Following some simple guidelines, ensuring adequate training and supervision is in place along with clearly defined roles and responsibilities can help to limit exposure to risk or injury. All work that is intrusive to the fabric of the building, even voluntary work should be subject to the schools permission to work scheme and or any other systems of permission the schools landlord may require. In some circumstances there may be the need to provide welfare facilities for volunteers; this could include changing and washing facilities, toilets etc. The school facilities may not be accessible, especially during holiday periods and this should be considered before any work starts.

2 The Senior Person (Head Teacher/Deputy Head/ Assistant Head)

The senior person on site will be responsible for planning the work to be carried out, selecting appropriate volunteers and ensuring that all work is supervised and monitored. Only volunteers who are qualified, competent and trained to carry out the specific tasks required should be selected.

3 The Competent Person (The Volunteer)

When selecting volunteers for any task the following definition taken from Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Guidance should be considered: "A competent person is a person who possesses sufficient technical knowledge, experience and skills to be able to carry out the specific task and prevent danger or injury arising during the course of the work or as a result of the work". From the legal point of view, choosing a competent person for a particular task is extremely important. If an accident were to occur which was reportable to the Health and Safety Executive, the Inspector dealing with the investigation would expect the senior manager in control to explain how the volunteer was deemed to be competent. Obviously some volunteers may be qualified in a particular area of work and this would normally show, along with experience, that they were competent. However, some people are capable of tasks through experience alone and depending upon the type of work, this may be enough. If there is any doubt about a volunteer's competence in any of these areas, then a contractor on the Contractor Health and Safety Assessment Scheme (CHAS) database should be used instead.

4 Risk Assessment

Once the senior person responsible has selected appropriate and competent volunteers, a risk assessment should be carried out. This is required as part of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. Further general information and guidance is contained in Safety Guidance Document SG1 'Managing Health & Safety Risks'. Your assessment should be suitable and proportionate to the risk and must be documented. A range of generic risk assessment templates are available from your Health & Safety Consultant to support you in undertaking your risk assessments. The risk assessment, when carried out properly, should identify potential risks areas prior to the activity taking place, so that preventive measures can be taken.

5 Equipment/Materials

Only equipment and materials that are safe, in good condition/adequately maintained and suitable for the work environment should be used. All electrical equipment should be visually checked before each use and have a current PAT tested certificate, all other equipment should carry a CE mark.). All equipment and materials should be stored safely and securely. For example ladders should not be left out overnight, sharp tools and electrical equipment should be kept away from children and flammable or toxic liquids should be locked away, there should also be safety data sheets for all substances, additional guidance on Control of Substances is available in Safety Guidance Document SG9 COSHH. All volunteers must receive the appropriate information, instruction and training on how to operate any equipment they are asked to use, including stopping, starting, and the correct method of storage. Any equipment that is hired must be used in accordance with the supplier's instructions and where necessary, suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) should be provided and worn. All equipment and materials should be removed at the end of the job and good housekeeping should be maintained throughout the whole period of the activity.

6 Personal Protective Equipment

It may be necessary and, in some cases, a legal requirement to supply personal protective equipment to volunteers carrying out work. This may include: **Hard Hats** Where there is a danger to the volunteer from above **Eye Protection** Potential danger to the eyes from sharp objects e.g., cutting flagstones or grinding. Protection from chemicals/dust etc **Dust Masks/Respirators** Where there are risks from dust or fumes Other areas of the body that may require protection can include hands (provide appropriate gloves), feet (provide protective boots) or ears (provide ear defenders). Further guidance and information on protective equipment is available in Safety Guidance Document SG6 Personal Protective Equipment. It is recommended that tasks requiring specialist protection because of the hazardous nature should not be undertaken by volunteers (e.g. weed spraying).

7 Some Examples of Tasks Undertaken by Volunteers

(a) Working at Height

This is a particular area of concern and must be considered at the planning and risk assessment stage. Only people that are trained and deemed as competent to work at height should be used and suitable equipment must be provided. Further information and guidance can be obtained from Safety Guidance Document SG9 Working at Height

(b) Lifting and Handling

If the task involves lifting and handling that may create a risk or injury, then an assessment should be made to determine whether the risk can be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level by using mechanical aids. Where volunteers are required to lift and handle, the risk assessment should also determine their individual capability for the loads that they are expected to move and suitable manual handling training provided. It is possible that an injury caused through lack of planning could give rise to a civil claim. Further information and guidance can be obtained from Safety Guidance Document SG7 Manual Handling Operations.

(c) Painting

It is extremely important that when selecting paint the specifications set out by the Department for Education are followed (use of flame retardant paint in appropriate areas). The purpose of the guidance is to ensure fire and smoke does not spread quickly through a school and therefore allows time for the full evacuation of the building. If in doubt advice on the types of paint to be used should be sought from your Premises Advisor and or Health & Safety Consultant. Paint manufacturers information and instructions should always be followed when preparing surfaces and applying paint, and reference should be made to the safety data sheets for the paints, and other substances used e.g. for brush cleaning. NB When “rubbing down” to prepare surfaces for painting, permission to work may be needed and the school asbestos register **must** be consulted.

(d) Glazing

This is also an area where it is important to follow recommended specifications on the type of glass to use, whether using volunteers or contractors. The specifications should meet current British Standards for all glass installed, particularly for low level glazing and or glazing in fire doors. In addition Building and Planning Regulations may also apply. Accidents have occurred in schools when the wrong type of glass has been fitted. (Further information is available in Safety Guidance Document SG5 Low Level Glazing). Please remember that people handling and installing glass should be competent to do so and will require appropriate Personal Protective Equipment.

(e) Tree Planting

If trees are to be planted near to buildings or playgrounds, try to ensure that once the tree has grown, the roots will not cause damage to drains, damp-proof courses, playground surfaces or any foundations due to root spread. If you are unsure contact your grounds maintenance provider for advice or your local authority tree officer.

(f) Pruning and Clearing Undergrowth

The work area should be cleared of any hazardous objects (needle sticks etc - Safety Guidance Document SG17 Management of Needles & Syringes Provides further advice). In addition check for wildlife before any work commences. Disposal by fire is not recommended. Debris should be placed in secure skips or removed from site on the same day.

(g) Litter Picking

An initial inspection should be carried out to look for hazardous items. Appropriate equipment should be provided and used for picking up sharp objects (needles, broken glass etc) e.g. long handles tools, litter pickers, rakes, brush and shovel. Volunteers should be made aware of the procedure in place for dealing with drug residues and instructions should be given to look out for insects and insects’ nests and to avoid disturbing them. Where students or young people are involved in the work ensure close supervision is provided. Safety Guidance Document SG17 Management of Needles & Syringes Provides further advice.

(h) Removing Graffiti

A clearly segregated area should be kept around the work area (Warning signs, barriers, cones, tape, etc should be used) Spillages should be dealt with promptly. Suitable equipment should be provided and used e.g. long handled tools are used as appropriate to eliminate the risk of falling from height Where specialist Chemicals/substances are to be used these should be handled and stored safely and any residue disposed of in accordance with manufacturers' instructions, ensuring reference is made to the safety data sheets. Further general advice on substances hazardous to health is provided in Safety Guidance Document SG9

(i) Exposure to Sun

Where volunteers are required to work outside, Information regarding the risk associated with working in the sun should be provided to them. Where possible, work should be planned to avoid the need for excessive work in the sun. Regular breaks should be taken away from direct sunlight. Volunteers are encouraged to keep their skin covered during hot weather (Encourage appropriate clothing e.g. long sleeves and sunhats and high factor sunscreen).Volunteers should also have access to cool drinks. Further information relating to Working in the Sun is provided in Safety Guidance Document SG20

8 Further Advice and Information

Some areas of work are not suitable for volunteers and schools need to be mindful of any landlord, statutory or legal requirements, in addition work undertaken by volunteers will not be guaranteed. If in doubt speak to your Premises Provider and or Local Authority Buildings Standards Department. As volunteers have many of the legal and insurance rights of an employee it is important that they are appropriately inducted, trained, supervised and managed. Your Health & Safety Consultant may be able to provide you with additional help and support including access to a Volunteer handbook/ Toolkit Template to help support you with the recruitment and management of volunteers in your school.

Signed: 

Sarah Isberg (headteacher)

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