



Thinking Schools Academy Trust

Volunteering Policy

This policy was adopted on	September 2021
The policy is to be reviewed on	September 2024

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1. Introduction and Aims

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust (The Trust) believes that volunteers provide a valuable contribution to the work of our schools and that they enrich our trust through their breadth of knowledge and experience.

We are committed to involving volunteers in a way that supports our trust's strategic aims and vision, as well as our development plans.

The aim of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust volunteering policy is to:

- Encourage the wider community to engage with The Trust, thereby enhancing the curriculum, raising achievement and promoting community cohesion
- Ensure that volunteers support our trust's visions and values, and adhere to our policies
- Provide staff, volunteers and parents with clear expectations and guidelines
- Set a clear, fair process for recruiting and managing volunteers
- This policy has been developed in line with the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance,
- Ensure that all volunteers have a positive and rewarding experience, during their time spent with the trust and its schools

2. How we use our volunteers

The deployment of any volunteer, whether for one day or for a number of sessions over a longer period, must take account of the needs of the school, the pupils and the staff to ensure the arrangement is of benefit to the pupils, the school and the person(s) volunteering.

The deployment of any volunteer will be at the discretion of the Headteacher (or Head of School, Executive Head, Principal) and for an agreed period, subject to review no less than annually with the Headteacher. The class teacher remains responsible at all times for the organisation of the class and methods of work.

Volunteers should not be asked to carry out duties which

- fall normally within a Teacher's responsibility under loco parentis;
- fall normally within the job description of a Teacher or member of support staff, i.e. they must not be asked to cover the absence of staff from School;
- would normally be performed by a contractor engaged by the Trust;

Volunteers must be designated to a specific member of staff to whom they will be directly responsible. The staff member taking responsibility for the volunteer must ensure the volunteer is adequately inducted into the role. This additional responsibility is not compulsory for staff and should only be delegated with the agreement of the employee concerned. It is essential that the volunteer is clear which member of staff has this responsibility

At The Thinking Schools Academy Trust, volunteers may:

- Listen to children read
- Accompany school visits
- Work with individual children
- Work with small groups of children
- Support specific curriculum areas, such as ICT or art

This is not an exhaustive list.

Volunteers may be:

- Members of the governing board
- Parents
- Former pupils
- Students on work experience
- Local residents
- Friends of the school/members of the PTA

This is not an exhaustive list.

Volunteers must not be asked to replace paid staff or be given responsibility within the school that would normally be associated with paid employees. Equally, volunteers must not carry out any activities which might cause conflict or restrict professional teaching duties.

Volunteers not undertaking regulated activity ('Ad-hoc' volunteers), for example, a parent helper on a school trip, are not covered by this policy. These volunteers must be supervised at all times by a member of staff

Members of the governing board working at the school in their capacity as governors (for instance, conducting school monitoring visits or attending meetings), are not covered by this policy. They are covered by our governor code of conduct. [Governors Code of Conduct](#)

3. How to apply to volunteer

Any person interested in volunteering at The Trust should, in the first instance contact the school where they wish to apply, to see if any opportunities are available.

All prospective volunteers should then complete the Volunteer Application form which can be found in appendix 1.

The Trust's Equality policy applies to any person(s) volunteering within our schools or central offices and the same principles will be applied. To view our Equality policy, please follow the link [Equality Policy](#)

4. Appointment of volunteers

Volunteers are appointed by the Headteacher/Principal in individual schools or the appropriate department manager for central volunteers. Any person wishing to apply for a volunteering position must be over the age of 18.

All appointments are conditional upon the completion of a volunteer DBS check where the activity requires and other appropriate safeguarding and recruitment checks (including two satisfactory references), and relevant training.

All volunteers will be required to attend a meeting with the Headteacher/hiring manager to determine that the volunteer's position is suitable for them and to ascertain if any adjustments are required.

The Headteacher/hiring manager reserves the right to withdraw or end a volunteer opportunity at any time.

DBS checks for volunteers working in the school through other organisations will be conducted by the relevant organisation. The school will ask for written confirmation that DBS checks have been carried out before a volunteer is allowed to start work at the school.

5. Safeguarding

Safeguarding our pupils is of paramount importance, and our volunteers must share our commitment to child protection.

To ensure we are upholding our responsibility to keep our pupils safe, we will:

- Conduct volunteer DBS checks
- Obtain satisfactory references
- Conduct risk assessments where necessary

We will also consider the results of any DBS checks that return with unspent and spent listed convictions, and assess these on a case-by-case basis, with regard given to the nature of the conviction and the nature of the work the volunteer will be involved in.

We will provide safeguarding training to all volunteers **prior** to them beginning work at the school, including ensuring that they have read and understood part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

In accordance with KSCIE, should a low level concern be raised against a volunteer, the TSAT Low Level Concern policy will be followed.

Similarly, should a safeguarding allegation be raised against a volunteer, the TSAT Management of Safeguarding Allegations policy will be followed.

We require volunteers to read, agree and adhere to our Code of Conduct and to read, and adhere to, the school's policies on:

- Safeguarding
- Health & Safety
- Social Media Policy
- Use of mobile phones
- ICT and internet acceptable use

- Online safety
- Behaviour
- Any other appropriate policies deemed necessary to the role undertaken

6. Induction, training and support

Training requirements will be determined by the Headteacher, or the appropriate member of staff. Volunteers must complete appropriate training prior to beginning work at the school. Volunteers may be required to undertake additional training, provided by the school or a third party, to support the activity they undertake where relevant. This may include online training.

All volunteers must have safeguarding training. Other training requirements will be based on the nature of the work the volunteer will be doing.

Volunteers will be made aware of the following procedures in addition to those referenced in the safeguarding section:

- expectations with regard to confidentiality;
- access to information related to pupils and/or staff;
- expected level of pupil/student behaviour;
- Trust Equalities Statement, especially focusing on issues relating to discrimination and the use of appropriate language;
- the Trust Complaints procedure;

All volunteers will receive support and guidance from their line manager or the department they are volunteering within. This will be in the form of regular feedback and meetings when necessary. If anyone volunteering requires any additional support or guidance they should arrange to meet with their line manager to discuss this.

7. Confidentiality

Information about pupils, parents and staff is confidential. Volunteers are not permitted to discuss issues related to pupils, parents or staff with those outside of the organisation.

If volunteers have concerns, they should raise these with the appropriate member of staff. They shouldn't discuss them with pupils or parents.

This doesn't prevent volunteers from adhering to the school's safeguarding policy (with regard to reporting safeguarding concerns or disclosures).

If concerns relate to safeguarding, volunteers must follow the guidance in the appropriate safeguarding policy and inform the designated safeguarding lead.

If concerns are related to whistle-blowing, volunteers must follow the guidance in our whistle-blowing policy.

Any materials or resources used by a volunteer are the property of the trust and consent should be sought before using any items outside.

8. Conduct

As a volunteer of The Trust, you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner both inside and outside work, which upholds the reputation of our schools and Trust.

The following points should be adhered to at all times and if you are unsure what is expected of you then you should raise this with your line manager.

- The Academy expects all volunteers to deal with one another, the public, pupils and parents in a courteous and civil manner. Relationships between colleagues should be supportive, cooperative and respectful. Volunteers should behave in a way that enhances the performance and wellbeing of others and the effectiveness of the Academy and Trust.
- You should notify the Headteacher/Principal if you are in any doubt about the effect of your conduct outside work.
- If you are subject to criminal proceedings, you must disclose this to the Headteacher/Principal. If any aspect of the information that forms your DBS check changes whilst you are volunteering with the Trust you are obligated to inform the Head Teacher/Principal immediately
- A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, volunteers must ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately, for the tasks they undertake.
- Personal property of a sexually explicit nature such as books, magazines, DVDs or such material on any electronic media must not be brought onto the Academies premises or stored on Academy equipment.
- Social networking sites and blogging are extremely popular. Volunteers must not post material which damages the reputation of the Academy or which causes concern about their suitability to work with children and young people. Those who post material, which could be considered as inappropriate, could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct and have their volunteering agreement ended.
- The Academy prohibits the involvement of volunteers from any form of social networking with students. If there is, any doubt about whether communication with students is appropriate, advice should be sought from a member of a senior management team. Volunteers must adhere to the Social Media Policy.

9. Expenses

If within your role as a volunteer for The Trust you incur any additional expenses, this should be discussed with the Headteacher/Principal or relevant line manager.

If it is deemed that they are reasonable expenses that have occurred through your role and by **prior agreement** then The Trust will reimburse additional costs.

The Trust will only reimburse expenses that have been agreed by your line manager and are claimed through an authorised expenses form.

All expenses must be supported by receipts.

Further information on expenses can be found within our Expenses Policy. [Click here - TSAT Expenses Policy](#)

10. Insurance

The Trust and its schools hold Risk Protection Arrangements with third party liability. Any person volunteering within a Trust school would be covered under this arrangement.

11. Data protection and record keeping

Everyone has rights with regard to how their personal information about them is handled.

During the course of our activities we will collect, store and otherwise process personal information about our pupils, pupils' families, staff, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, and other third parties. Thinking Schools Academy Trust are committed to meeting their legal obligations concerning data protection and confidentiality and to seeking to achieve best practice in relation to information governance.

Any breach of this or any other information governance policy will be taken seriously and may result in legal action being taken against the Academy, the Trust and/or the individual responsible for the breach.

Full further information our full Data Protection Policy can be viewed on our website. [Click here for Data Protection Policy](#)

12. Complaints or Concerns

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust undertakes to promote positive working relationships and is committed to providing a working environment where Employees and volunteers are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

The Trust recognises that occasionally an individual may have a problem, concern or complaint regarding their working environment or another volunteer or employee.

Where a complaint or concern is raised, it is preferable for this to be resolved informally between the individual and the line manager or the person who the complaint is made against, as close to the point of origin, wherever possible.

In the event that a complaint or concern cannot be resolved informally, the volunteer should raise the issue formally with the appropriate Headteacher/line manager. All complaints and concerns will be handled fairly and level of due diligence will be undertaken before coming to a decision regarding how the complaint or concern may be dealt with.

Responsibilities of the Academy Trust

- To ensure volunteers are given the opportunity to explain their concern and the outcome sought.
- To seek a means to resolve the complaint/concern wherever possible whilst taking into account Trust policies, procedures and rules.
- Achieve an early resolution of complaints where possible and allow volunteers to take their concerns to a further level of management where appropriate.
- To ensure consistency and fairness of treatment

Responsibilities of the Volunteer

- To raise complaints only in relation to legitimate concerns and not of a malicious /vexatious nature
- To engage with managers in seeking to resolve any complaint that has been raised – by attending meetings and /or participating in any investigation and providing evidence to support the complaint
- To make every effort to raise and resolve matters informally at an early stage and to consider mediation as a means of resolving concerns.
- To act in a respectful and professional manner towards all parties
- To maintain confidentiality.

13. Moving on

In the event that a volunteer wishes to end their volunteering agreement with The Trust, they should confirm this in writing to their line manager.

Whilst there is no set notice period for anyone volunteering, the trust would appreciate as much notice as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made to cover the tasks being undertaken by the volunteer.

Any personal information relating to volunteers will be stored in accordance with GDPR regulations and further guidance on this can be found within the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

14. Monitoring and review

This policy has been approved by the governing board and will be reviewed regularly.

Appendix 1- Volunteer Application Form

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all employees and volunteers to share this commitment.

Personal Details

Title.....First Name.....Last Name.....

Known as (abbreviated/alternative forename)

Address.....

.....

Postcode.....

Mobile No.....Home No.....

Email Address.....

Please say why you are applying for voluntary work at The Trust. Include any skills or experience that you can bring to the role along with what you would like to achieve from the volunteering. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Have you Volunteered before?
If yes, please provide details:

YES/NO

Please provide details of employment and/or work experience and other volunteering roles that you have undertaken

Do you have any particular needs that we should be aware of so as to best support your volunteering with us?

References

Please provide two referees, one from your current or most recent employer and one character reference. Please let your referees know that we may contact them.

Employment Referee	
Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Occupation	
Email Address	

Character Referee	
Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Occupation	
E-Mail Address	

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check.

Please note that it is a criminal offence for a person that has been barred from working with children and young people to work or volunteer in a school.

Declaration

I confirm that I have read and agree to the TSAT Volunteering Policy

I declare that the information given on this application form is true and correct

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....