



# THAMES LEARNING TRUST

Name of Policy	Volunteers Policy
Scope of Policy	This policy relates to all volunteers across The Thames Learning Trust.
Approved by	Chief Executive
Date of Approval	October 2019
Review period	Three Years
Review Date	October 2022

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER



# THAMES LEARNING TRUST

## **The Thames Learning Trust Volunteers Policy**

### **Introduction**

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers and is relevant to staff, volunteers and trustees within the Trust. It aims to create a common understanding and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained in relation to the management of volunteers.

### **Our commitments**

We recognise volunteers as an integral part of our Trust. Their contribution supports our mission and strategic aims, and complements the role of paid staff. We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the Trust, its stakeholders and the volunteers themselves.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers will not be used to replace staff.

We are committed to offering a flexible range of opportunities and to encouraging a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including those from under-represented groups such as youth, people with a disability, older people and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

We recognise that people have a right to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering and can contribute in many ways. We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

### **Who is a volunteer?**

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activity on behalf of our Trust, unpaid and of their own free choice. Work experience placements and internships are not the same as volunteering. Please refer to HR for further information about these. Trustees are volunteers with responsibility for governance of the Trust.

Volunteers may be involved on a one – off, short term or on a longer term, regular basis. They may be involved in:

- Classroom support utilising personal skills or knowledge
- on our board of management as trustees
- Sports activities and coaching
- in community engagement to raise awareness of our work
- Business studies activities e.g. mock interview panels
- School trips
- Performances by pupils e.g. plays

Volunteers are valued for:

- bringing additional skills and new perspectives to the schools
- enabling us to be more responsive and flexible in our approach
- championing our cause within the wider community

### **Roles and responsibilities**

All volunteers will have a designated staff member/volunteer for guidance, support and supervision.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks or for the Trust to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits.

However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the Trust expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the Trust.

The Trust expects volunteers:

- to be reliable and honest
- to uphold the Trust's values and comply with organisational policies
- to make the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training
- to contribute positively to the aims of the Trust and avoid bringing the Trust in to disrepute
- to carry out tasks within agreed guidelines

Volunteers can expect:

- to have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- to receive training in relation to safeguarding pupils
- to receive adequate support and training
- to be insured and to volunteer in a safe environment
- to be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- to have opportunities for personal development
- to be recognised and appreciated
- to be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- to know what to do if something goes wrong

## **Organisation of the visit**

Volunteers will be in schools according to a pre-agreed timetable where they will be coming in either for a one off event or for a more regular activity that they will be involved in due to personal interest or expertise.

All volunteers activity will be organised by the Year Lead/Head of Department who will agree times and dates of one off activity in advance and create an agreed timetable for regular visits. The Principal, HR Manager should be informed in advance of any volunteer being contacted to undertake voluntary work and the Principal will make the final decision as to whether they may carry out this work.

When in a school, volunteers will not be given access to the school computer network or copying/printing facilities.

## **Recruitment and selection**

Information will be made available to those enquiring about volunteering, including written role descriptions, which set out the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, skills required, and benefits. A risk assessment will be undertaken on all volunteer roles.

Recruitment will usually involve an informal interview, application form and the taking of references; the process will be defined and consistent for any given role - for example the recruitment process for trustees, regular volunteers and for volunteers for one off events will be tailored in each case and may differ from one another.

For roles, which involve care giving, and/or sustained and direct contact with young people, volunteers will be required to have a full DBS disclosure check, which will be arranged by the Trust. DBS disclosures are dealt with in the strictest confidence.

A volunteer in a school will not be in regulated activity if they are supervised to a reasonable level in which case an enhanced DBS check would not be a requirement. A school does have the discretion, however, to request an enhanced DBS check for a volunteer. If the volunteer is unsupervised, they will be in regulated activity and will therefore be required to receive an enhanced DBS check.

It is an offence for an employer to engage in regulated activity someone whom they know has been barred by the DBS.

Where a school chooses not to undertake a discretionary check on a volunteer that they deem to be supervised to a reasonable level, the school should have a clear risk assessment outlining how the decision has been made about the level of supervision in place.

## **Induction and training**

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

## **Dealing with problems**

The Trust aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. It seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly.

We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to whom they can turn in the case of any difficulty.

Volunteers will be made aware of the Trust's complaints policy and how to use it. They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviour by volunteers will be addressed by the Trust.

## **Moving on**

When volunteers move on from volunteering with us they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully.

When voluntary work has ended, a simple record will be made by the Year Lead/Head of Department and sent to the HR Manager for future reference:

- name of volunteer
- Area of the school they volunteered in
- Brief description of role they undertook
- Brief comment on the value added to the activity
- Recommendation on using the for volunteer activity in the future either in the same area or the school as a whole.

Organisational policies relevant to volunteers include:

Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Complaints, GDPR, E-safety, First Aid.