

HARLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

**A Parent's Guide
to Helping in School**



January 2015

At Harlands we have always been able to count on the support of parents. We work closely with parents to make sure that children get the best possible opportunities in their primary education.

For some parents this support extends to helping during the school day, in classrooms or on school trips.

Teachers are grateful for support and young children love their parents to be actively involved in their school.

How to get started

Teachers usually prefer regular help that they can rely on each week, but sometimes teachers will invite parents in for a one off occasion such as Decorations Day. Teachers are also grateful for help when the class is taken out for the day. Indeed, most of those trips could not take place without the support of a significant number of parent helpers.

If you are prepared to offer regular or occasional support to a class in the school, please approach the teacher personally, or call at the office. It does not have to be the class where your child is a pupil.

Before you begin

It is essential that you agree to an enhanced DBS check. This is for all people who work with children, paid or voluntary. Please ask at the office for details and an appointment to complete a DBS check. You will be asked to provide proof of identity, proof of address and proof of your National Insurance number. The school keeps a register of parents who have been checked. If you are on that list you will be able to respond without delay should the teachers ask for volunteers.

If you volunteer to drive children to a visit or a sports event, you must provide evidence of your driving licence, car insurance and MOT if appropriate, to the office.

Things to think about before your first session

Confidentiality

For many parents, their initial motivation to help is curiosity about what goes on in the classroom so that they can make sense of some of the things their child is telling them (or not, as the case may be!) The more regularly one helps, the more knowledgeable one becomes about the class and individual children and teachers. PARENT HELPERS MUST REMEMBER TO KEEP THIS INFORMATION TO THEMSELVES. Children and teachers welcome visitors into their classes and do not expect to be the subject of gossip or speculation. Children, teachers and families involved in the school are all entitled to confidentiality. We expect parent helpers to remember that they are in a privileged position, with access to the classroom and ask them to respect the trust which is shown to them.

The school reserves the right not to allow any parent to be a helper.

Child Protection

All adults who work with children, whether on a paid or voluntary basis, have a statutory duty in child protection. We expect our parent helpers to be aware of our child protection policy.

Sometimes a helper can be with the child in less formal situations and it is at those times that children talk freely, or behave more openly. As a result of a conversation or suspicion of injury, you may have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child. These concerns **must be reported to the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, SENco, or in their absence, the Office Manager, immediately.**

You should always treat children with personal respect and never behave in a way that compromises your own integrity. Adults should ensure that they are not alone with a child in a quiet or private place on any occasion.

Parents should be aware that the level of touching or hugging of children that is considered appropriate at school is much less than you might have with your child's friends in a home environment.

Health and Safety

All adults working in the school should be aware of health and safety regulations, including fire exits and procedures. They are responsible for the safety of any group of children in their care. Fire and health and safety information can be discussed with the class teacher or any member of the office team.

Security

All visitors including parent helpers are expected to sign in and out and we request that you wear your badge at all times.

The school cannot take responsibility for items lost and we do not have much adult storage space, so please expect to keep your personal belongings with you.

Protocols

The school dress code is "smart casual". Please do not wear revealing clothes, even in hot weather. Mobile phones should be silent and not used in teaching areas, including classrooms, the hall and library.

The teacher will be expecting you. Please give as much notice as possible if you are unable to come.

Your class teacher or TA will arrange for you to have a drink if you are helping across two sessions in school.

Children's behaviour

We expect our children to behave very well. We have high expectations that they will be polite and courteous towards other children and adults. We expect them to behave equally well with parent helpers.

As a parent helper, it is wise to understand the school's approach to behaviour management.

- We praise children for good behaviour and good work – not just for exceptional work.
- We make sure that the child feels safe and knows what is expected of them.
- We do our best to make the activities interesting for the children.
- We follow up quietly and consistently for poor behaviour.
- We do not criticise or disparage the efforts made by children.
- We listen to the children's views and show them personal respect and we have high expectations that they will do the same for others.

But how will I know what to do?

The teacher will brief you when you come to help. This list is not exhaustive:

- Helping a group or individual with a task
- Talking to children about their experiences
- Helping children with creative activities
- Helping children with organising or presenting their work
- Taking children for a walk to learn something
- Hearing children read
- Reading to children
- Helping the teacher with preparation of materials
- Playing games with children
- Practising times tables
- Accompanying classes on outings
- Accompanying groups to sporting events

How do I help children in their learning?

Make sure you understand the purpose of what you have been asked to do.

All the tasks given to children are there for an educational reason. If you know that reason, you are more able to help the child achieve. For example, if a group of children are drawing, the emphasis may be on imagination, or accuracy; perhaps on the use of shading or perspective. By knowing what the lesson objectives are, you will be able to guide the children to concentrate on that aspect through the questions you ask and the praise you give them.

Let the children do the work

You are not there to do the work for them. If you help too much you will be depriving the child of the chance to learn for themselves. Only say enough to help them. Use questions to encourage the children to think for themselves. Children switch off if adults talk for too long!

When children talk to each other about the work, their understanding improves. Do not try to make them work in silence unless directed by the teacher.

Help children to “re-focus” if they wander off the task. If you cannot get the children involved, let the teacher know quickly.

Do not focus on your own child. You have volunteered to help the class and your child will get used to your presence quite quickly. If you feel the need to discuss your own child with the teacher, let the teacher know and arrange a meeting outside the helping session.

If your own child is unsettled when you work in the class, consider volunteering for another class.

More information

As you continue to work in the school you will learn more about what happens and will develop your skills and insights into how children learn. The small group support and extra help you give can be crucial for developing the confidence of an individual.

Many of our parent volunteers enjoy the work so much that they go on to careers in education as teaching assistants and higher level assistants and administrators. Several of our helpers, have taken further qualifications to become teachers.

MOST IMPORTANT – if you are not sure, be confident to ask!

Thank you to all parent helpers. Mrs Goodlace and The Staff.

Helping on School Trips

The class teacher will brief you so that you understand the purpose of the trip, how the trip has been organised and about any specific and important health and safety issues.

The **safety** and **good behaviour** of the children is **paramount** and so it is important that each group leader is vigilant and aware of where their group of children is at all times.

Here are some general rules:

- The safety of your group is your chief responsibility. You must know exactly where they are throughout the duration of the trip. Please ensure that a regular headcount is carried out throughout the visit especially when moving from place to place.
- You should stay with your group at all times unless instructed otherwise by the group leader.
- You are responsible for making sure that each child in your group conforms to the health and safety instructions given by the class teacher.
- Please support the class teacher by ensuring the children show the same high standard of behaviour as expected within school.
- The teacher will give you an emergency contact number so that you can telephone him/her if you become separated from the main group, if a group member becomes injured/ill or if a child is misbehaving.
- Keep in close contact with the trip leader, usually the class teacher, who will be co-ordinating the visit. Should a child be lost please inform the trip leader immediately. The children have been advised to seek and join any of the other groups until they can be returned to their specified group.
- Help the children in your group to take full advantage of the trip by pointing things out, answering questions and being enthusiastic.
- Kindly refrain from using your mobile phone throughout the trip and from taking photographs of any of the children in your group, including your own.
- Whilst on the trip, you should not smoke, drink alcohol or use inappropriate language.
- If a child needs the toilet please make sure the whole group goes together and whilst the children go to the toilets in pairs, the adult waits outside with other members of the group. Please keep a head count in and out.
- Please make sure the children eat their lunch at the proposed times.
- Do not allow the children to eat their way through a secret stash of sweets which could make them sick on the coach trip!
- Please do not buy treats for your own child, or indeed any of the children in your group.
- The group leader will schedule in time for refreshments – please do not go off and leave your group unless your leader is aware.
- At a sports event, remember that we expect our children to be polite and sporting, even if they are disappointed. We expect them to be well-mannered in all circumstances. This guidance applies even if other groups of children are behaving badly. Please inform and seek advice from the trip leader immediately if you need assistance with any behavioural issues.