



Armathwaite School

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Parent, Carer and Volunteer Helper Guidelines

Thank you for volunteering to help our children in school. Your help and support makes such a huge difference. It enriches the learning experience for children and means that teachers can plan even more exciting learning for the children. It also gives you the opportunity to develop your understanding of how children learn in school and we are sure that you will find volunteering informative, rewarding and fun.

All help is very much appreciated, whether this is every week or just occasionally.

The aim of this booklet is to give you all the information you need to make your time both worthwhile and enjoyable. Thank you for your support.

Security

When you are helping in school please make sure that you sign the visitors' book when you arrive and leave; this is important in case the fire alarm rings.

Confidentiality

It is very important that all staff, parent volunteers and other adults working in the school work to a policy of confidentiality. For this reason we ask that confidentiality be maintained in respect of children's attainments, attitudes and behaviour whilst operating in school as a helper. It is vital that you do not share anything about specific children with friends or family or a child's parent if you know them. The teachers here have the responsibility for informing parents about their child's progress in school. Any matter that is of concern should be discussed with the Head teacher. Please exercise the utmost discretion in all respects.

Volunteers working in classrooms should do so on the understanding that they support the teaching staff and will not pass opinion on such matters as discipline or teaching styles outside the school.

Parent Helper Guidelines

- Occasionally children are a little unsettled to begin with when their parent/carers are working with other children in the classroom. Most children soon get used to it and really enjoy it. It is helpful if you can explain to your child that you will be coming into school to help all of the children and that he/she will not always be able to work with you.
- Please don't have favourites - it is important that all children in school are given equal time and attention.

- Please encourage the children to be independent – we expect children to try everything themselves. Rather than ‘do’ things for children we model for them and then let them have a go themselves. This is when great learning takes place and self-confidence is developed.
- Please do not lift or carry children.
- If a child does or tells you something that causes you concern, please tell the class teacher or Headteacher as soon as possible after the disclosure in an appropriate setting so that others cannot overhear.
- If you find that you are not going to be able to come into school it is really helpful if you can let us know.

What are the key points when working with children?

- It is vital to encourage the children to talk about what they are doing in order to support them in using the correct vocabulary.
- There is no rush. We give the children plenty of time to complete a task and they will often need to return to it over several occasions.
- Always encourage the children to do things for themselves. It is important that they are independent and although they need help and supervision, the end result should always be their own work. Please don’t be tempted to do the work for them! The learning that goes on while the children are doing an activity (we call this the learning process) is often much more important than the end product!
- When playing games with the children, try and encourage the idea of taking turns and sharing. The real joy of a game is the taking part!

What kind of activities might you be engaged in?

We might ask you to become involved in a variety of activities such as:

- Sharing books;
- Working on the computer;
- Playing games;
- Making things;
- Cooking;
- Gardening;
- Sewing;
- Supporting literacy/maths activities
- Coming with us on visits;
- Sometimes just being there is what is needed!

We also always need help with things like photocopying, filing, laminating, mounting things for display and sorting/tidying resources and we know that some people would prefer to offer their help in this way.

Many of the activities that we ask you to help with are the sorts of things that you do with your own children at home.

The teacher will give you:

- Clear guidelines about the activity.
- All the materials you need.

If you are unsure of what you have been asked to do, please just ask and we will run through it again with you.

Afterwards it is very helpful if you can talk to the teacher about how the activity went and how you got on. Please ask if there is anything that you are not sure about or if you need help.

What does 'sharing books with children' mean?

A few quick pointers to help you when reading or sharing a book with a child:

- The teacher will indicate whether you should read to the child or the child should read to you. If this is not clear, ask. With younger children we always read the book to them first before they read it.
- If the child appears 'stuck', encourage them to use their phonics and 'press the sound buttons/ blend'. Please use the soft sounds as adding 'uh' to the end of sounds makes them much more difficult to blend. Also use what the child knows about what has already been read and look at the illustrations for clues. If this doesn't work, tell them the word. We always encourage 'having a go' so if you make a mistake or can't work it out this is a normal part of the learning process. Remember PRAISE PRAISE PRAISE!!!
- Encourage the child to predict what might happen next and discuss how they feel about the story and characters.
- Make the experience an enjoyable one, sharing with the child your love of books and giving lots of praise. This is a moment of quality time for you both.

Thank you!

In case we forget to say so please be assured that we really do appreciate your help (we may sometimes forget to say so because we are busy, but we do!!)

If you have any worries or queries, or any good ideas on how we can improve something, please let us know – we are always willing to listen.