



Olive Academies

Volunteers at Olive Academies: Guidance

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Updates/revisions included:	• Update review date to annual (DfE expectation) and reflect revisions aligning with KCSIE 2025. • Add a line noting: “This policy must be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and any subsequent updates.
These are OA central guidelines – sample templates are provided at the end of the document which will need to be edited according to local context. It includes: • a sample letter welcoming a volunteer • a memorandum of understanding to be completed by volunteers when they start • a sample expression of interest form to be used where relevant	

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Introduction

This document sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers and is relevant to volunteers and staff working within our academies. It aims to create a common understanding and expectations and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained in relation to the management of volunteers.

At OA we are lucky to have committed Members, Trustees and Academy Advisory Board members volunteering to lead the governance of the trust – there are governance handbooks available that guide those taking on these roles – these can be viewed on our trust website: www.oliveacademies.org.uk

This policy should be read in conjunction with statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). All volunteers are considered part of our wider safeguarding system.

Aims, Ethos and Values

The values of Olive Academies (OA) are:

- CONVICTION – Everyone has the capacity to reach their potential
- DETERMINATION – Not giving up on those who have not experienced success

- **AMBITION** – All challenges can be overcome and education is an important lifelong journey
- **REFLECTION** – Learning from experiences and developing a capacity to improve further.

Our commitments

We recognise that volunteer contributions can support our ethos and values and complement the role of paid staff. We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the organisation, its clients 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.

Roles and responsibilities

All volunteers should have a designated staff member who provides them with 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 organisation 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 organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

Volunteers can expect:

- a supportive, welcoming and positive environment that encourages them to get the most out of volunteering
- to have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- to receive adequate induction, support and training
- to be given copies of policies on safeguarding, health and safety, equality and confidentiality 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 receive out of pocket expenses
- 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

Volunteers who are not engaged in regulated activity must always be supervised by a person who is in regulated activity. Supervision must be 'reasonable in all circumstances' and consistent with KCSIE definitions.

In return the trust expects volunteers:

- to be reliable and honest
- to uphold the trust's values and act as a positive representative of the academy
- follow any policies and procedures relating to safeguarding (including use of personal mobile devices), health and safety, communications and equality
- to make the most of opportunities given, eg for training
- to contribute positively to the aims of the trust and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- to carry out tasks within agreed guidelines

Safeguarding Responsibilities of Volunteers

All volunteers must:

- understand that sexual harassment and child-on-child abuse are unacceptable and must be reported immediately
- report concerns following the academy's safeguarding procedures
- understand that children may not disclose harm directly and may show signs through behaviour

Support for Gender-Questioning Children

Volunteers must follow staff direction when supporting pupils who are questioning their gender. Parental involvement is the default expectation unless a safeguarding risk exists

Recruitment and selection

When a volunteer post is advertised, equal opportunities principles will be adhered to in recruitment and the opportunity will be widely promoted. Positive action to target recruitment may be used where appropriate. 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 (template reference forms available from OA); the process will be defined and consistent for any given role - for example the recruitment process for regular volunteers and for volunteers for one off events will be tailored in each case and may differ from one another. Where applicants are not able to be placed in their preferred role, they will be provided with feedback.

In line with our safer recruitment policy and following guidance from the Department for Education, volunteers working in our academies 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. The type of DBS check required will depend on whether the volunteer is engaged in regulated activity. An Enhanced DBS with Barred List check is required for regulated activity; an Enhanced DBS without Barred List check may be used for supervised volunteers.

A criminal record is not necessarily a bar to volunteering – where needed a risk assessment will be carried out.

Volunteers must inform the academy immediately of any change in circumstances that may affect their suitability to work with children

Volunteering roles are not used as replacements for paid roles within the academy's staffing structure. Should a paid vacancy arise within the academy, volunteers are welcome to apply for such a post alongside others and they will be assessed as part of the recruitment process following OA recruitment guidelines. There should be no presumption of an 'automatic right' to a paid role as a result of previous volunteering at the trust.

All volunteers for whom vetting checks are carried out will be entered on the academy's Single Central Record in accordance with KCSIE requirements.

Confidentiality

It is very important that staff, parents and volunteers work to a policy of absolute confidentiality. Volunteers may see issues that may be concerning – students may be: upset or misbehaving; bullying others; or struggling to keep up with the work done by others. Volunteers may also hear or see other information concerning a student's personal circumstances while they are at the academy. It is vital that information relating to specific students is not shared with friends; family; parents; the media; or external organisations.

Teachers and other care workers have the responsibility of informing parents of any concerns and arranging appropriate interventions for a child. It is not appropriate for volunteer helpers to intervene in these professional responsibilities.

Volunteers working in classrooms 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. Volunteers do, however, share a duty of care and if any issues of concern are observed they must be reported to the headteacher.

Volunteers must follow academy expectations regarding information security, including the safe handling of digital information. Volunteers must not create, share, or forward AI-generated or digitally altered images of pupils, as this may constitute child-on-child abuse.

Security

The academy office manager will provide guidance on procedures when volunteers arrive at the academy including signing in and out and visitors' badges.

Dealing with problems

Any concern or allegation about a volunteer that meets the harm threshold must be referred to the headteacher and managed in accordance with Part Four of KCSIE (Allegations against staff, including volunteers)

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. Where informal resolution is not possible, the trust's grievance policy will be adhered to.

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 organisation.

Expenses

Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim.

Moving on

When volunteers move on from volunteering with the trust, 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. Volunteers who have remained with the organisation for at least 3 months will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options.

Appendix A: template letter for new volunteers



Dear <>

Letter for volunteers prior to joining the trust

It is a pleasure to welcome you to our academy and to thank you for volunteering to work with our children. Olive Academies believe that the involvement of members of our wider community in children's education is vital and we encourage full and active participation in a range of activities.

Enclosed is guidance on what you can expect as a result of becoming a volunteer at the academy - it gives you all the information you need to make your time both worthwhile and enjoyable but please do come back to me with any queries.

I have also included: outline of role description, details of DBS/safer recruitment checks etc
< include as appropriate >

Your role may require specific safeguarding checks as set out in KCSIE, including an Enhanced DBS check with or without a Barred List check depending on whether the role is considered regulated activity.

Thank you for your invaluable support. 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.

<Name>

<Title>

Appendix B - Memorandum of Understanding: Olive Academies



Memorandum of Understanding: Olive Academies

I will:

- comply with any requests for information under the trust's safeguarding / safer recruitment policy;
- read the trust policies in relation to safeguarding, health and safety, communications and equality;
- comply with OA guidance on online safety and use of personal mobile devices
- report any information given to me by a child which is of a sensitive nature to the headteacher in order to protect myself and the student;
- positively promote good behaviour by looking for the good, praising small steps in learning and encouraging positive relationships;
- avoid at all times being left alone with a student without other students or adults present;
- respect confidentiality and refer matters concerning individual students to either the class teacher or member of staff with responsibility for supporting the work of volunteers;
- not communicate any aspect of school life, including information relating to individual students, to family, friends, parents, the media or external organisations;
- never comment on aspects of school life, members of staff or students on social media;
- take on a variety of tasks which may or may not involve students;
- follow the academy policy in relation to being a non-smoking environment (including the use of e-cigarettes);
- endeavour to promptly inform the academy if I am unable to attend at the time agreed;
- Follow academy guidance on information security and online risks, including AI-generated content;
- Understand that sexual harassment and child-on-child abuse must be reported immediately and
- be a positive role model at all times.

Signed:

Print Name:

Date:

Appendix C - Volunteer Expression of Interest Form



Volunteer Expression of Interest Form: Olive Academies

(to be modified as appropriate and in line with the role)

First name/s:						
Surname:						
Address:						
Postcode:						
Telephone:						
Email:						
Please tell us why you want to volunteer at <name> academy:						
Please tell us about any relevant knowledge, skills and experience that you bring to the role:						
Please indicate by ticking the box as to when you are available to volunteer:	Monday	☐	AM	☐	PM	☐
	Tuesday	☐	AM	☐	PM	☐
	Wednesday	☐	AM	☐	PM	☐
	Thursday	☐	AM	☐	PM	☐
	Friday	☐	AM	☐	PM	☐
Do you have any criminal convictions? If yes, please specify (a conviction will not necessarily exclude you from volunteering, but it will be taken into account when assessing your suitability):						
Are you currently barred from working with children?	Yes/No					

Do you understand this role may require regulated activity checks?	
Do you consider yourself to have a disability or any medical condition that may affect your volunteering?	Yes/No If yes, please specify:
Please provide a brief summary of your employment history:	

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Please note that applying to support the school in a voluntary capacity may be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in line with our safer recruitment policy.

Signed:

Date:

Please return your signed and completed form to the <academy office>.

Thank you very much for your interest. We will be in touch with you shortly.