



**BANDONBRIDGE
NATIONAL SCHOOL**

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Welcoming the skills, experience and goodwill of our school community

Ratified by the Board of Management:

1. Introduction and Purpose

Bandonbridge National School values the contribution that volunteers can make to the life of the school. Parents, grandparents, former pupils, members of the local community and other invited adults can enrich pupils' learning by generously sharing their time, skills, interests, occupations and life experiences.

This policy provides a clear framework for involving volunteers in a way that is welcoming, purposeful and safe. It aims to ensure that voluntary involvement supports teaching and learning while protecting the welfare, privacy and dignity of pupils, staff and volunteers.

2. What We Mean by a Volunteer

For the purposes of this policy, a volunteer is a person who gives time to the school without payment and with the approval of the Principal or a designated teacher. Volunteers complement the work of school staff; they do not replace teachers, Special Needs Assistants or other employees and do not assume responsibility for the supervision, teaching or discipline of pupils.

3. Examples of Voluntary Involvement

Volunteer activities will depend on the needs of the school and the skills and interests available. They may include:

- Listening to pupils read, sharing books or supporting reading activities under the direction of a teacher.
- Talking to pupils about life experiences, family or local history, hobbies, culture, travel, community involvement or areas of personal expertise.
- Speaking about a job, profession, trade or career and answering age-appropriate questions from pupils.
- Using photographs, artefacts, presentations or slideshows to support an invited talk, subject to school approval and appropriate copyright, privacy and safeguarding considerations.
- Helping with gardening, planting, biodiversity, school grounds or environmental projects.
- Sharing a practical skill or helping to lead an art, craft, music, drama or other creative activity in partnership with school staff.
- Assisting with appropriate school projects, celebrations or community initiatives.
- Supporting recurring activities approved by the school.

4. Parents, Grandparents and the Wider Community

The school particularly welcomes opportunities for parents, grandparents and other members of the school community to share knowledge, talents and experiences that can bring learning to life.

Participation is voluntary and is arranged according to curricular relevance, pupil needs, safeguarding requirements, available space and the practical needs of the school.

Invitations to volunteer do not create an entitlement to participate in a particular class or activity. The Principal and teachers retain discretion regarding the suitability, timing, frequency and organisation of all volunteer involvement.

5. Approval and Arrangements

- All volunteer involvement must be agreed in advance with the Principal or designated teacher.
- The purpose, date, duration, location and nature of the activity should be clear before the visit begins.
- The relevant teacher will explain the volunteer's role, the age group involved, appropriate boundaries and any practical or safety requirements.
- Regular volunteers may be given a short induction covering safeguarding, confidentiality, emergency procedures and relevant school policies.
- The school may discontinue or alter a volunteer arrangement at any time where this is considered necessary for pupil welfare, safety, educational reasons or the effective operation of the school.

6. Child Safeguarding and Garda Vetting

The safety and welfare of pupils are paramount. Volunteer arrangements will be managed in accordance with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment and applicable child safeguarding and Garda vetting requirements.

Whether Garda vetting is required will depend on the nature and circumstances of the volunteer's role, including the level, frequency and type of access to children. Where vetting is required, the activity must not begin until the school is satisfied that the appropriate process has been completed.

Volunteers should normally work in the presence or under the oversight of a teacher or other authorised staff member and must not place themselves in a situation where they are unnecessarily alone with a pupil. Any child protection concern must be reported immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), or Deputy DLP in the DLP's absence.

7. Supervision and Responsibility

The teacher remains responsible for the pupils and for the educational activity. Volunteers must follow the teacher's directions and agreed arrangements. They must not independently discipline pupils, assess pupils formally, administer medication, provide personal care, transport pupils, contact pupils privately, or make decisions that are the responsibility of school staff unless a specific lawful and approved arrangement applies.

Where a volunteer leads a specialist activity, such as art, drama, gardening, music or choir, the activity remains part of the school's planned programme and appropriate staff oversight will be maintained.

8. Regular Volunteer Activities

Some volunteers may support the school on a regular basis. For example, Peter Stobart attends on Mondays to lead the choir. Recurring arrangements should be agreed with the Principal, reviewed periodically and organised so that roles, supervision, safeguarding expectations and practical arrangements remain clear.

Regular voluntary involvement is greatly valued but remains subject to the needs and timetable of the school and may be amended or paused when circumstances require.

9. Confidentiality and Privacy

Volunteers may become aware of information about individual pupils, families or staff through their involvement in school life. Such information must be treated as confidential. Volunteers must not discuss pupils' learning, behaviour, additional needs, family circumstances or other personal matters outside the appropriate school context.

Volunteers must not access pupil records or staff records unless specifically authorised and legally appropriate. Information encountered accidentally must not be copied, photographed, retained or shared.

10. Photographs, Slideshows and Digital Materials

- Any presentation, slideshow, video, website or digital material to be shown to pupils should be suitable for the age group and, where appropriate, agreed with the teacher in advance.
- Materials should respect copyright, privacy, equality and the school's ethos.
- A volunteer must not photograph, film or record pupils unless this has been specifically authorised by the school and any required consent arrangements are in place.
- Images or information about pupils must not be posted on personal social media accounts or shared through private messaging.

11. Health and Safety

Volunteers must follow the school's Health and Safety Statement and reasonable instructions from staff. Activities involving tools, gardening equipment, art materials, lifting, food, outdoor work or other potential hazards must be planned with appropriate risk controls and pupil supervision.

Volunteers should report accidents, hazards or concerns promptly. In an emergency or evacuation, volunteers must follow staff directions and the school's emergency procedures.

12. Standards of Conduct and Professional Boundaries

- Treat every pupil and adult with dignity, fairness, patience and respect.
- Use language and behaviour appropriate to a primary school.
- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries with pupils.
- Do not exchange personal contact details with pupils or communicate with pupils through personal social media, messaging or online accounts.
- Do not give gifts to individual pupils without prior agreement from the school.
- Do not make promises of confidentiality to a child where a safeguarding concern may arise.
- Do not attend the school while impaired by alcohol or drugs, and do not smoke or vape on school premises.
- Follow the school's policies and the reasonable directions of the Principal and staff.

13. Equality, Inclusion and School Ethos

Volunteer activities should promote inclusion, respect and a sense of belonging. Volunteers are expected to respect the diversity of pupils and families and the characteristic spirit and ethos of Bandonbridge National School. Activities should be accessible and age-appropriate and should avoid stereotyping, discrimination or material likely to cause unnecessary distress.

14. Attendance, Sign-In and Identification

Volunteers should follow the school's visitor procedures, including reporting to the designated entrance or office, signing in and out, and wearing a visitor badge where required. Regular volunteers must also follow any agreed arrival, collection, parking or access arrangements.

15. Expenses and Status

Volunteers give their time freely and are not employees of the school. Volunteering does not create an employment relationship or entitlement to payment. Volunteers should not incur expenditure on behalf of the school without authorisation.

16. Concerns or Difficulties

A volunteer who has a concern about an activity, pupil welfare, safety or their own role should speak promptly with the supervising teacher or Principal. Concerns about a volunteer's conduct or suitability will be addressed by the Principal in accordance with safeguarding, safety and school governance requirements. The school reserves the right to end a volunteer arrangement where this is considered appropriate.

17. Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Management has overall responsibility for the governance of this policy. The Principal is responsible for approving and overseeing volunteer arrangements. Teachers are responsible for planning and supervising volunteer contributions relevant to their classes. Volunteers are responsible for following this policy, maintaining confidentiality and complying with staff directions.

18. Review and Ratification

This policy will be reviewed periodically and earlier if required by changes in legislation, national guidance, school circumstances or safeguarding practice.

This Volunteer Policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Bandonbridge National School on _____ and will take effect from that date.

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Principal

Next review: _____