

# GATEHOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## **GUIDELINES on/for ADULT HELPERS IN SCHOOL**

June 2003

### **Introduction:**

These guidelines outline the school's principles and procedures in respect of use of adult helpers in the school, for both within (i.e. between 9.00am and 3.00pm) and beyond (e.g extra-curricular activities) the school day, and represent a compilation of recent advice to schools upon which they draw heavily.

There are many reasons why adults who are not employees of the Council come into our school. These include various tradesmen, delivery and courier staff, various representatives, to name but a few. The purpose of this document, however, is to concentrate upon those adults who come into school *by invitation of the school* in order to assist in the delivery of our curriculum.

These people are most welcome. The school recognises and values the contribution these people make to the richness and diversity of the experiences for our pupils. By the very nature of the tasks they are asked to undertake, they will be in contact with pupils, but their contribution in terms of enrichment of normal school routine, and delivery of the curriculum cannot be over-emphasised.

### **Definitions:**

Some definitions used in this document are:

- The term '**child(ren)**' or '**pupil(s)**' should also be seen to include '**and young person(s)**',
- The term '**supervisor**' may be the Head teacher or his representative,
- The term '**supervision**' need not take the form of a 'permanently present member of staff', but would require some written evidence to demonstrate that such advice had been given and that supervision was available.
- The terms '**helper**' and '**volunteer**' refer to any adult assisting with pupils in any way in a manner arranged by, with or through, the school,

## **Obligations and Expectations:**

There is an increased obligation on all of us in relation to pupil safety and well-being. The **school** has obligations both to ensure the protection of children is not compromised, and also to adult helpers, in ensuring they themselves can provide enriched experiences most effectively. **Helpers** should know exactly what is required of them, how their task should be completed, and their role and relationship with the teacher. Helpers should not be asked to undertake something beyond their remit – or capabilities.

The school will issue all helpers with a **‘job description and declaration’** form (appendix 1), which outlines what is being asked and expected of the adult helpers prior to their involvement. The helpers must complete and sign a confidential **‘registration form’** (appendix 2), which includes the helper’s consent to a police check as to their suitability to work with children, and clarifies the position in respect of insurance.

**The guidance below, in respect of individual helpers, is adhered to by the school in order to ensure uncompromising protection for our pupils:**

### **i: Employees:**

All prospective employees who are likely to have direct access to children are subject to a ‘Disclosure Scotland’ check as a condition of their employment. There is not, therefore, any requirement for a teacher to be present in a supervisory capacity when such staff are working in school or leading extra-curricular activities (There may, of course, be other reasons for a teacher being present on such occasions but these would not relate to child protection).

In certain (highly exceptional) cases where approval is given for an individual to be employed before the Disclosure Scotland check is complete (e.g. where a delay in employing a person could increase the risk to child safety – for example, a crossing patrol vacancy – it is the head teacher’s responsibility to ensure that this employee is closely supervised and does not have one-to-one access to children until the check has been satisfactorily completed.

### **ii: Representatives of Outside Organisations:**

Many organisations, aware of the importance of Child Protection issues, will arrange for their members to be Disclosure Scotland checked, but this will not be the case in all instances. The Authority is not in a position to insist that this must be done. Accordingly, when representatives of such agencies are working with pupils, a member of staff should be present at all times.

### **iii: Volunteers:**

It is not practicable for the Education Authority/Council to undertake a Disclosure Scotland check on each and every volunteer offering to assist in schools. Our practice here is to ask all potential volunteers to complete a **registration form** (appendix 2), which is retained in school for the duration of the volunteer's contact with us. As this is a self-declaration only, **these volunteers may not work with pupils in an unsupervised capacity at any time.**

There are four sets of circumstances in which **Disclosure Scotland checks on volunteers** should be requested:

- a) where the volunteer has declared that he/she has one or more previous convictions - or is currently the subject of an investigation - or has charges pending. That person should **not operate** as a volunteer until such time as a satisfactory Disclosure Scotland check has been received by us.
- b) where no previous conviction(s) etc have been declared, but the head teacher has reason to be concerned about the background and/or fitness of the person to act as a volunteer. That person may only operate in a **supervised** capacity until such time as a satisfactory Disclosure Scotland check is received.
- c) Where the purpose in engaging the assistance of the volunteer is to have him/her engage with pupils in an unsupervised capacity (e.g. transporting to sports events/sports coaching).
- d) Where the volunteer will be involved in an overnight stay with pupils.

In these cases, the school can institute a Disclosure Scotland check, (current cost £13.60 per person - via Jane Ramsay, Principal Personnel Officer, Woodbank, 30 Edinburgh Road, Dumfries).

### **Code of Good Practice:**

Dumfries & Galloway Education Committee has adopted a **Code of Good Practice**, which all schools must follow. It contains 9 principles, or 'articles', of good practice. School must:

- 1: Adopt the policy statement agreed by the Education Committee on safeguarding the welfare of children and young people.
- 2: Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people may occur.

- 3: The **Head Teacher is to act as Co-ordinator** for the safety and protection of children and young people.
- 4: Apply agreed procedures for protecting children and young people to all volunteers.
- 5: Give clear roles to all paid staff and volunteers.
- 6: Use supervision as a means of protecting children and young people.
- 7: Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children or young people in an interview before appointment. Ask if an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children or young people.
- 8: The Head Teacher, as the co-ordinator for safety and protection, has the right to review all voluntary appointments at any time.
- 9: Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse and advise on the risk of false and malicious claims of abuse.

*All leaders, teachers, supervisors and volunteers must be familiar with the code, understand it, and be committed to its implementation.*

**Article 1: 'Adopt the policy statement agreed by the Education Committee on safeguarding the welfare of children and young people'.**

Good management requires that everyone is clear about what they are trying to achieve, and may subscribe to a declared statement of aims and policy for that purpose.

Gatehouse school adopts the following **policy statement**, which sets out our policy on safeguarding the welfare of the children. It clearly states the duty of all those involved in both curricular and extra-curricular activities to *prevent* the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of all children and young people under the age of 16 with whom they come into contact.

**The Education Committee has a deep concern for the wholeness and well-being of each individual. It seeks to safeguard the welfare of all people, regardless of age, who come into contact with schools. It is the responsibility of each individual within schools to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people.**

The above statement shall be brought to the attention of all existing and new members of the school, and to all who work with children and young people.

**Article 2: ‘Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people may occur’.**

The Head Teacher has the responsibility of ensuring that all persons under his jurisdiction are well managed and that he is satisfied that the children’s activities are such that situations where possible abuse are minimised.

Some examples of ways of reducing opportunities for possible abuse:

- As far as possible, an adult should never be left alone with a child or young person in a place or room which cannot be observed easily by others. (This may often be achieved simply by leaving doors open between rooms). This serves to protect both the child and the adult.
- Ensure that all workers with children and young people do not meet a child off school premises except in the presence of a parent or other adult.
- Where children are to be transported by car or minibus, ensure there is always more than one passenger in the vehicle.
- Always remember that such preventative measures are as beneficial to the adult as to the child. Wrongful allegations or even simple misunderstandings on the part of children are by no means uncommon.
- Appendix 3 is brief guidelines by way of a ‘do’s and don’ts’ for all who work with children.

**Article 3: The Head Teacher is to act as Co-ordinator for the safety and protection of children and young people.**

There should be as few intermediaries as possible involved in a case of abuse between the disclosure by a child and referral to the police. For this reason it is important that disclosures or complaints should not be investigated or details discussed with the pupil by leaders of the group. The incident should be referred, without delay, to an appropriate authority. It would be the function of the co-ordinator to liaise with police and other authorities in any further action taken. Experience shows that in cases of abuse brought before the courts, prosecutions often fail because of evidence which is deemed to be contaminated or prejudiced against the accused.

The more positive role of the co-ordinator would focus on protection procedures and would be:

- to facilitate and promote the dissemination of information on risk management and the protection of children and young people from abuse,
- to advise on and facilitate training opportunities for all who are engaged directly or indirectly in work among children and young people,

- to facilitate such vetting procedures as may be required in respect of would-be volunteer workers,
- to be available to volunteers who may wish to express concerns relating to persons or procedures, and
- to monitor the continuing implementation of this Code of Good Practice by all organisations under the jurisdiction of the school on behalf of the Education Authority.

**Article 4: Apply agreed procedures for protecting children and young people to all paid staff and volunteers.**

The point about this recommendation is that there are no exceptions. There is no certain way of identifying a would-be abuser. There is always the risk that an adult engaged in children's work might abuse for the first time. The fact that the incidence of child abuse is so small should not lull anyone into a false sense of security. The attitude that 'it couldn't happen here' is not a wise one to adopt.

This is why any procedures set in place to protect children and young people must apply to *all* of those in contact with them. This is not the same as treating each person working with children and young people as being under suspicion, and the Head Teacher should be careful to stress this point. The granting of exemption from screening or training procedures of any one individual can just as readily be seen as discriminatory against others. We, the school, take sensible steps to protect children from abuse, and these can then be observed by all. This is a matter for careful and sensitive planning and management.

**Article 5: Give clear roles to all paid staff and volunteers.**

The abuse of children and young people is most likely to occur where it is recognised by the abuser that an abuse is unlikely to be discovered. Abuse is most easily concealed where there is confusion amongst the adult leaders over roles, responsibilities and accountability.

Volunteers will have job descriptions (appendix 1) appropriate to their specific role, and these should include clearly worded descriptions of their responsibilities for the protection of children and young people. Amongst other things, the description should detail:

- the person to whom they are accountable for their work (usually the Head Teacher),
- the person(s) whose work they will supervise,
- a description of the work they will undertake with children, with reference to any guidelines adopted for safeguarding the welfare of those children,

- the duty to prevent the abuse of all children and young people in contact with the school and reference to the action to be taken if abuse is discovered or disclosed.

Volunteers must also be clear as to what is expected of them. Best practice includes the **job description** document (appendix 1) which incorporates the declaration to be signed by the volunteer to the effect that he/she is familiar with the requirements stipulated in the interests of preventing abuse and also knows how to respond in the event of being made aware of an abusive incident.

Additionally, each volunteer is issued with a copy of the document '*Advice for Helpers in Schools*' which identifies what is expected of them and how they should respond in cases of alleged abuse.

The **registration form** (appendix 2) is to be completed by the voluntary worker and is retained by the Head Teacher on file. This is confidential to only the Head Teacher and Director of Education.

#### **Article 6: Use supervision as a means of protecting children and young people.**

Regular meetings (informal if necessary) are to be held between supervisor and helper to review and plan work.

Special attention should be paid to any situation in which a child is being either highly favoured or harshly treated as these may be signs of abuse. Circumstances in which a child has suddenly absented him/herself from the group may require exploration.

Where the Head Teacher is not convinced by talking with a staff or team member about the security/welfare of a child, the matter may warrant further consideration. In such a case, the procedures agreed for the investigation of possible abuse should be followed (separate school documentation on Child Abuse refers to these).

It is the Head Teacher's responsibility to ensure that, at all times, rash decisions are not taken. He should be prepared to refer matters to the personnel identified under (the Authority's) agreed procedures.

It is also the Head Teacher's responsibility to take opportunities to observe those for whom they are responsible as they work with children. A positive outcome of this will be to provide feedback to the helper in respect of working with children, and may include the possibility of a continuing training programme for volunteers.

#### **Article 7: Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children or young people in an interview before appointment. Ask if an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children or young people.**

It is already common practice for schools to interview applicants for paid posts. A similar, though less formal, practice should be adopted, if possible, in the selection of volunteers who would work with all children.

The main purpose would be to explore the volunteer's experience of such work, drawing upon the information on the application form signed by the applicant.

The style of interview should be informal and conducted in the spirit of inclusiveness. At the same time, the seriousness and importance of the issues should not be overlooked.

If there is any doubt regarding the volunteer's suitability, this should be explored further through more searching questions, with possible additional follow-up of the applicant's referee(s).

**Article 8: The Head Teacher, as the co-ordinator for safety and protection, has the right to review all voluntary appointments at any time.**

The Head Teacher must have **no doubt** as to the volunteer's ability and commitment to prevent abuse of children, as specified in the **job description**, and has the right to terminate the appointment/help at any time.

**Article 9: Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse and advise on the risk of false and malicious claims of abuse.**

Volunteers may gain the trust of children to the extent that it is to them the child turns in times of difficulty – including sharing concerns about being abused. Volunteers should know how to deal with such a situation, and with situations of false and/or malicious accusations against staff or helpers.

Gatehouse school has written guidelines setting out the steps we take if a child discloses details of abuse to him/her, or if that pupil suspects that abuse may have taken place.

Our guidelines include:

- a reminder of the volunteer's duty to prevent abuse, including the duty to report any abuse discovered or suspected,
- guidance on what constitutes abuse and how to recognise it,
- specific instructions as to who to inform if abuse is disclosed or suspected,
- the Head teacher's name and the address and telephone number of the local social work department and police station.
- guidance on procedures to be followed if it is suspected that the superior of the establishment or organisation may be guilty of abuse,

some indication as to what happens next, and

- guidance on how to support the child who has been abused.

**Insurance:**

In terms of insurance for those involved in activities with adult helpers, the current (June 2003) position is:

**Volunteers (helpers)** are covered by the Council's insurance programme in respect of third party claims made against the Council, where the Council are deemed to be negligent.

The Council does not cover **volunteers** where they commit a criminal act or become personally liable through their own actions.

Therefore, where a **volunteer** is negligent, he / she is not covered by the Council's insurance. **Volunteers** should, at all times, follow Council guidelines in respect of the activity they are performing.

**Children and staff** (i.e. employees of the Council) are covered by the Council whilst involved in curricular and extra-curricular activities.

**Volunteers** are not insured in respect of personal accident.

Appendix 1:

**Job description and declaration for workers with children and young people.**

This form should be completed for all workers with children and young people. If the role changes substantially a new form should be completed. Copies should be retained by the worker and the Head Teacher.	School:
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**To be completed on behalf of the school prior to commencement of work**

Name of worker	Name of group
When they meet	
Age range	Person to whom responsible
Work to be undertaken	
Arrangements for supervision (by teaching staff)	

**To be completed by the worker with children / young people**

I understand the nature of the work I am to do with children / young people. I have read the Code of Good Practice produced by the Education Department for safeguarding children and young people. I understand that it is my duty to protect the children and young people with whom I come into contact. I know what action to take if abuse is discovered or disclosed.

**Signed:**

**Date:**



Appendix 2:  
**CONFIDENTIAL**

To be completed by all individuals working with children and young people:

**Registration form for voluntary workers with children and young people**

<p>The school is responsible for the acceptance, and, where applicable, the accreditation of all individuals working with children and young people. Every individual should fill in a copy of this form which should be retained by the Head Teacher. This form is confidential.</p>	School
	Full name
Home address	Former name
	<p>Please give details of previous experience of looking after or working with children and/or young people</p>
Date of birth	
Telephone: Day: Evening:	
How long have you lived at the above address?	
<p><b>If less than 12 months, please give the following information:</b></p> <p>Previous address:</p> <p>How long there?</p>	<p>I understand that a police check may be made on the suitability as to my presence in school.</p> <p>Signed:</p> <p>Date:</p>

**NOTE: Volunteers should be aware that, whilst they are covered by the Council's Public Liability Insurance Policy when engaging in authorised voluntary activities, they are not covered by the Council's Personal Accident Policy.**

Copy to be retained by Head Teacher and Volunteer