

Aldersbrook Primary School – Forest School Parent Helper Policy

Where the term classroom is used within this policy, this is in its widest possible sense and includes all learning environments, including the outdoor classroom.

Rationale

Aldersbrook Primary School welcomes parents and helpers into the school and value their input into the education and experiences of our children. Parents and helpers have a wealth of strengths that they can bring to the classroom. We strive to make all adult helpers feel welcome in our school and valued in whatever they can offer. All doors are open to parent/helpers. (In this policy, the term parents encompasses grandparents, relatives and all other helpers for the community).

Purpose

1. To welcome parents into the school and give them the opportunity to contribute to the lives of the children.
2. To ensure that parents are not put in positions of responsibility or supervision that are unsuitable for them.
3. To ensure the safety of the children when working with different adults.
4. To allow parents to assist staff in their day to day running of the classroom.
5. To ensure that appropriate supervision of parents in school takes place.
6. To promote the schools open door policy to parents and the larger community.

Guidelines

All parents should be treated the same in whatever classroom they are working in and staff should feel that parents are benefiting the children's education.

This policy clarifies the different roles parents can undertake and the safety measures that should be adhered to ensure the wellbeing of all the children in the school.

Conclusion

The role of parents is very important in our school. It is positive that our school is open to parents and that parents feel they can offer something to the children. Organising parents in the classroom and being clear about their role and work will benefit the children and give all adults a clear sense of purpose of direction. The more support children have while they are in school can only give them greater benefits.

Forest school volunteer

Whilst the role of a forest school volunteer and their use to support learning shares all of the points covered above, the school recognizes that responsibilities placed on the volunteer in the outdoor environment are often more rigorous than might be found at other times.

It is important that our volunteers understand that they cannot be passive adults, effectively further children in the group, but that they have a responsibility under the guidance and direction of the forest school leader to ensure guidelines, policies, risk assessments and procedures are followed consistently at all times. Volunteers should be reassured that ultimate responsibility rests with the forest school leader but as a forest school volunteer, there will be an expectation for them to contribute actively in the wellbeing and safety of the group.

Parent Participation Policy Guidelines Policy

When parents offer to help in school, staff may wish to consult this policy document for guidance.

Discussion

Experienced staff will arrange to meet with the parent at a mutually convenient time to discuss what they may like to do in the classroom. Most parents take part in the following activities;

- Hearing individual children read.
- Working with a group of children.
- Taking part in supporting activities.
- Mounting art work or sticking work in books.
- Forest school/outdoor learning.

Review and Dialogue

It is important that the parent is comfortable in what they are doing, so they are encouraged to state what their strengths are and what they would most like to do.

Teachers should talk to their parent helpers and ask if they are content in their undertaken role. Adjustments can then be made if the teacher thinks it is necessary.

Police Checking (DBS) Disclosures and Baring Service

All parent helpers must be DBS checked before helping in our school.

A full register of those who have been DBS checked is held in the school office and maintained by the office manager.

When supporting in school, all parents must sign in at the school office.

Supervision of Parents

All parents must sign in at the school office upon arrival and before heading off to any classroom.

Parents will be told that they must never be in a one to one situation with a child.

Parents are told to avoid touching children in any way – this will be supported further by avoiding the children when they are changing for PE or forest school.

Parents are told that disciplining the children is the responsibility of the teacher.

If children behave poorly, they should be told to seek the teacher's intervention immediately.

Parents must understand that confidentiality is an essential part of their working in the classroom – it is not an opportunity to find out what is going on within the classroom to support a specific agenda, or to feedback on events which have occurred within the classroom to another parent. Such concerns should follow a different route, guidance can be sought from the class teacher or senior leadership team.

Parents should be told not to enter the children's toilet at any time. If they feel there is a problem with a child in a toilet, they must seek a teacher to deal with the situation.

Parents should be told not to administer any medication to children including any cream as this is the responsibility of the first aider.

Staffroom

Parents are welcome to join staff in the staffroom at playtime.

When parents are in the staffroom, staff need to be aware of this.

Discussion of specific children should be avoided and the conversation should remain professional.

Health and Safety

Parents should sign in at the school office every time they enter the school property.

When leaving the school parents must sign out at the school office.

The office staff will explain the fire drill procedure to every parent helper.

Parents should be visible to staff at all times, whatever work they are undertaking with the children.

Forest School Helper Guidelines

The forest school leader will arrange to meet with the parent at a mutually convenient time to discuss what they may be expected to do in the forest school setting. Generally, duties will include the following activities;

- Become familiar with the forest school handbook and all procedures contained within it.
- Take part in pre-session briefings from the forest school lead
- Assisting groups with tasks such as using tools.
- Promoting the ethos of forest school to raise self-esteem and confidence as an overarching aim.
- Assist in monitoring children when walking to and from the forest for any activities.
- Assist children with any kit, including waterproofs.

Parents will only be considered forest school helpers when they have read and signed that they agree to policies and procedures contained within the forest school handbook.

Review and Dialogue

It is important that the parent helper is comfortable in what they are doing, so they are encouraged to seek further advice or assistance from the forest school leader whenever instructions are unclear to them.

Police check (DBS) Disclosures and Baring Service

All forest school volunteers must have a DBS if they help on a regular basis.

A full register of helpers holding a DBS is held in the forest school file and maintained by the office manager.

When supporting in forest school, all helpers must wear appropriate clothing.

The forest school leader will introduce the helper to the children at the start of the first session.

General Guidelines for Forest School Volunteers

All helpers must sign in at the school office upon arrival and before heading off to any classroom.

Parents will be told that they must never be in a one to one situation with a child.

Parents are told by the forest school leader to avoid touching children in any way – this will be supported further by avoiding the children when they are changing for the forest school.

Parents are told that disciplining the children is the responsibility of the forest school leader and must take place within the ethos of the forest school. This will be discussed at an initial briefing. If children behave poorly, they should be told to seek the forest school leader's intervention immediately.

Parent helpers are told not to enter the children's toilets or assist with in-forest toileting at any time (other than to assist with digging – see toileting policy). If the helper feels that there is a

problem with a child when using the toilet, they must speak with a member of the school staff who will then deal with the situation.

Parents must understand that confidentiality is an essential part of their working with children – it is not an opportunity to find out what is going on within the forest setting to support a specific agenda, or to feedback on events which have occurred within the session to another parent. Such concerns should follow a different route, guidance can be sought from the forest school leader.

Parents should be told not to administer any medication to children including any cream as this is the responsibility of the forest school first aider.

Policy agreed September 2021

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