



Part of T4 Trust

# VOLUNTEER POLICY

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## 1. Aims

This policy statement aims to set out our school's arrangements for volunteers.

Ian Mikardo High School is a specialist school for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. All our students have statements of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plans relating to Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Our year groups run from year 7 to 13.

While the school is managed and staffed by an experienced and highly trained team, we welcome volunteers to work alongside them. We recognise that we have a responsibility to help young people to thrive in the world at large, and not just within an educational setting. Not only do volunteers bring different skills and experiences that can benefit students, but their place in the world outside the school plays an important role in expanding students' horizons. We regard volunteers as a valuable bridge to the wider world outside the school.

We are careful to ensure that volunteers do not replace paid staff, and we will provide opportunities for volunteers to work alongside professionals to gain confidence and develop and strengthen their skills. This policy explains how we seek to support them in their work with our young people, and how they can contribute effectively to the success of the school.

## 2. Ethos

The Ian Mikardo ethos revolves around healthy and mutually respectful relationships, as modelled by staff. This is facilitated by a warm, caring and emotionally open environment in which students develop their communication skills and learn to be themselves. We treat students as individuals, ensure they have a voice, and do what is best for each of them. We set high standards and have ambitious goals and work together in a creative, dynamic and safe environment.

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### 3. Equality and Diversity

We are a diverse community and equality; diversity and inclusion lie at the heart of our practice. While we encourage young people to take pride in their own identity, it is central to our ethos that they respect the identities of other people and recognise that all human beings are of equal worth, irrespective of their gender, race, sexuality, religion or other perceived difference.

We welcome volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds and expect them to respect and promote equality and diversity in their own practice. We aim to enable young people to reach their potential as confident, open-minded citizens and every aspect of our work focuses on removing barriers to learning and development. In this spirit we are committed to challenging negative attitudes, and we celebrate diversity. See *Equality Information and Objectives* for further details.

### 4. Recruitment

Volunteer roles at Ian Mikardo will be advertised locally and on the school's website. As with staff recruitment, we embrace the opportunity to use the skills and experiences of people from the local community who, by taking on a positive role in the school, become effective role models for our young people. Our experience shows that engaging volunteers through word of mouth leads to some excellent practitioners; we welcome this and invite prospective volunteers to contact us at any time. We will consider the skills they are offering and advise them of any appropriate opportunities.

Prospective volunteers will be invited to visit the school to find out how it operates and to assess whether they feel comfortable in the environment and could make a positive contribution within it. Working at Ian Mikardo does not always involve following set procedures and often relies on being able to respond to a difficult situation quickly and appropriately. We recognise that it is not an environment that suits everyone, and we respect those who decide not to pursue any opportunities we offer.

Those who wish to take their interest further will meet with a senior member of staff and be asked to supply two references. If their application is successful, they will be asked to complete a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check before they start work at Ian Mikardo. Having a criminal record does not necessarily prevent an individual from volunteering, but as we work with vulnerable young people it is essential that matters relevant to the DBS are declared.

In order to support students effectively, we ask volunteers to commit to working at the school for the duration of any given course or activity. If the volunteer is to work on a six-week drama therapy course, we ask them to commit to working on the course for six weeks. Other courses last for a term and again we ask for commitment. A volunteer who takes on

mentoring role will be asked to commit to supporting a student for an academic year; this is because our students struggle to build relationships with new people and find change difficult. Each volunteer is encouraged and supported to find the volunteering role that suits them.

Anyone seeking a voluntary opportunity at Ian Mikardo should contact the school by phone or email using the contact details at the foot of this document, you will be required to complete a short application form.

## **5. Induction, training and on-going support**

The young people we support at Ian Mikardo have challenging and complex needs. Many have statements of Special Educational Needs, others involved in our after-school provision may be NEET, young offenders, young mothers, young carers, or known to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Working effectively with vulnerable young people relies on a positive and open attitude of mind as well as the ability to pass on skills. Volunteers will attend an induction when they will be given a copy of this policy, *Guidance for New Staff* and the other policies referred to in this document. Before they start work, we will ask them to sign a statement saying that they have read and understood the policies.

Training for each volunteer post will be bespoke to reflect the work each volunteer is to take on, and the needs of the individual/s with whom they will work. It will be delivered by relevant members of staff and is likely to include risk assessment. Training at Ian Mikardo is on-going, and volunteers will receive further training as is appropriate.

Volunteers will be invited to attend briefing and/or debriefing sessions on the days they work. Teamwork is central to Ian Mikardo and volunteers can expect to be supported in their work by members of paid staff and other volunteers. We will expect them to contribute to the school's supportive environment by building positive and constructive relationships with staff as well as with young people, and to be open, honest, punctual and professional and demonstrate a positive work ethic at all times.

## **6. Behaviour management**

Volunteers should be aware that young people at Ian Mikardo can be unpredictable and volatile. Managing their behaviour relies on understanding the school's ethos, and on instinct and assessing each situation as it occurs. All volunteers are expected to be familiar with our behaviour policy and to understand and follow the ethos it promotes *Staff Guidance on Behaviour, Discipline and Anti-Bullying*. Volunteers should note that we do not practice physical restraint.

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## 7. Expenses

Ian Mikardo will reimburse volunteer's travel expenses on presentation to the school's Finance Manager of a written claim and evidence of purchase. Volunteers who drive to the school can claim 45p per mile of travel on presentation of a written claim detailing journeys and supported by fuel receipts. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform their car insurance company if they wish to drive to and from volunteering activities. Volunteers should note that the school has limited parking facilities.

Volunteers are invited to have one free meal per working day in the school's cafe

## 8. Insurance

Volunteers are covered by T4 Trust public liability insurance policy while they are on the premises or engaged in voluntary work off site.

## 9. Health and Safety and Safeguarding

If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation is made about another member of staff (including supply staff, contractors, volunteers, and visitors) harming or posing a risk of harm to children, they should speak to the headteacher (unless it relates to the headteacher, in which case they should speak to the chair of the LGB). All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding procedures and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team. All volunteers as part of their induction will be required to read the whistleblowing policy and sign that they have fully understood the school's whistleblowing procedures. Where staff feel unable to raise an issue with the school or feel that their genuine safeguarding concerns are not being addressed NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff/volunteers can call 0800 028 0285 and the line is available from 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends.

The email address is: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Alternatively, staff/volunteers can write to: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH

On induction, volunteers will be given a copy of the school's *Health and Safety policy*, *Fire evacuation policy* and *Child Protection and Safeguarding policy*. They will be expected to be familiar with these when they start work, and to understand and follow the procedures and ethos they promote.

## **10. Confidentiality**

Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff and should follow the guidance in the school's *Data Protection, Security and Social Media policy* at all times. Volunteers must never comment on their voluntary work at Ian Mikardo on social media, and they will be asked to sign a Data Protection agreement when they are inducted and annually every September. See Data Protection (Volunteers) agreement and the school's confidentiality agreement.

## **11. Drugs, alcohol and smoking**

Smoking, including the use of e cigarettes, is not permitted on the premises or grounds of Ian Mikardo High School. Staff and volunteers are further asked not to smoke within sight of the school; they are role models and we do not encourage young people to smoke. See the *Smoking policy*.

Any volunteer who shows evidence of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while carrying out their voluntary activities will be asked to stop working at the school immediately.

## **12. Resolving problems**

While the relationship between Ian Mikardo and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract, it is important that the school is able to maintain outstanding levels of service to the young people it supports. Volunteers should enjoy contributing to this service.

If a volunteer does not meet with the school's standards of service, the following procedure will be followed:

- S/he will be invited to meet with the Assistant Head Teacher or Deputy Head who will explain the concern/s.
- If this does not resolve the concern/s, s/he will be invited to a meeting with another member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- If her/his work continues to fall below our standards, we will stop using her/his services.

If a volunteer is dissatisfied with any aspect of her/his work s/he should:

- Explain her/his dissatisfaction to the Assistant Head Teacher, Deputy Head or another member of the SLT.
- If that does not resolve the issue, the volunteer will have a formal meeting with a member of the SLT.
- If we are unable to resolve her/his dissatisfaction, it would be inappropriate for her/him to continue to be a volunteer.

At all times s/he will be able to state her/his case freely and be accompanied by a friend.

## **13. Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed and revised as is appropriate, and at least every two years.

## **Data Protection, Security and Social Media Agreement (Volunteers)**

The school may offer individual volunteers access to computers to support their voluntary work at Ian Mikardo. This will depend on the nature of each individual's work in the school, and access and its extent will be at the discretion of the school's Senior Leadership Team.

## **14. Equipment**

- Always get permission before installing programmes on the school's computers.
- Damaging, disabling or otherwise harming the operation of computers, or intentionally wasting resources, will cut short your time with the ICT equipment.
- Only use the school's computers for educational and administrative purposes. Activities such as personal purchases, sales and social media are inappropriate.
- Always check files brought in on removable media (such as CDs, USB flashdrives etc) with antivirus software and use them only if they are found to be clear of viruses.
- Always check mobile equipment (eg laptops, tablet PCs, PDAs etc) with antivirus software and ensure they are clean of viruses before connecting them to the school network.
- Protect the computers by eating and drinking well away from ICT equipment.
- Do not use personal digital cameras or phones for taking or transferring images of students, staff or clients without the permission of the individuals involved, and do not store images at home without permission.

## **15. Security and Privacy**

- Never share your password; never use someone else's login or password.
- Never allow unauthorised individuals to use school computers or access the school's Internet.
- Be wary about revealing your home address, telephone number, school name or picture to people you meet on the Internet.
- Respect other computer users; ensure that you never harass, harm, offend or insult others.
- Respect the security on the computers; attempting to bypass or alter settings may put you, your work and the school at risk.



- ICT staff may review your files and communications to ensure that you are using the system responsibly.
- Ensure that any confidential data transported outside the school is protected by encryption and that you follow school data security protocols when using this data outside the school.
- Understand that information on the school's management information system or computer system is kept private and confidential except where the school deems it appropriate to disclose it to an external authority.
- Understand that information you gain about other volunteers, staff, students and clients should always be regarded as confidential.

## **16. Internet**

- Use school equipment to access the Internet only for school activities.
- Access only suitable material in the interests of your voluntary activity: using the Internet to obtain, download, send, print, display, transmit or gain access to materials that are unlawful, obscene or abusive is not permitted.
- Respect the work and ownership rights of people outside the school; as well as those of students, staff and clients. This includes abiding by copyright laws.
- Do not use the school's computers and Internet to access chat rooms or social media unless you have been authorised to do so in the interests of the school. Authorisation will be granted by a member of Senior Leadership Team.
- Do not use chat rooms and/or social media to discuss your voluntary work.
- Avoid references to school personnel in personal posts on social media or blogs.
- When working in a voluntary capacity with students or clients, be alert to the possibility of cyber bullying and grooming and encourage safe internet practice. Report any concerns immediately to a member of the school's staff.

## **17. Email**

- When using email in your capacity as a volunteer, always be polite and appreciative that others may have diverse views. The use of strong language, swearing or aggressive behaviour is as anti-social on the Internet as it is on the street.
- If, in relation to your voluntary activities, you receive an email containing content that is violent, dangerous, racist or otherwise inappropriate, always report such messages to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head immediately.

**Please read this document carefully. If you violate these provisions, you will be invited to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, and the school may stop using your services. Where appropriate, police may be involved or other legal action taken.**

**This policy should be read in conjunction with:**

Staff Code of Conduct Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Managing Allegations

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Policy, KCSIE 2024, Part Four: Safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors.

**I have read and understand the above and agree to follow the school's practice:**

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....