

Guidance for Primary Futures volunteers in schools

These ideas are aimed at helping you feel more comfortable and fully prepared for working with children in a primary school setting so that the children, school and of course you get the most from your visit. We hope very much you find them helpful. If you can think of any things we have missed please let us know by emailing: charlotte.lightman@educationandemployers.org

If you are not used to speaking to classes or groups of primary age children it can seem a touch daunting. Don't let that put you off! You will find the children are enthusiastic, eager to learn, keen to ask questions and pleased to welcome visitors who are showing an interest in sharing things with them.

Before your school visit

- Make sure the contact you have had with the school has given you all the information you need including name of the teacher, date, times, number and age of the children you will be working with.
- Try to respond to the teacher's emails and phone calls to assist with their planning so that your visit is a real success.
- Ensure you are clear on your role and what the school would like you to do.
- Prepare any items or visual aids you are planning to bring. It might help if you forward any ICT based presentations etc to the school in advance so they can set them up to ensure there are no problems.
- If for any reason you are unable to attend at short notice please let the school know. It would be really good if you could find a replacement if this were to happen.

Planning your time with the children

When planning your talk remember that the main aim of Primary Futures is to try to help the children see the link between their learning in school, particularly literacy and numeracy and future opportunities. If you are able to weave in examples of how your learning in school helped you in your career to date that would be great. Practical examples go down really well.

- Try to avoid cramming too much information in. When you are talking to and working with younger children it is really important to identify a couple of key areas you want to focus on and concentrate on conveying these in a variety of different ways as powerfully as you can.
- Don't be surprised if the children's questioning sometimes takes you to unexpected places! Having a member of the school staff supporting you will help you manage this.
- Remember the children are only of primary school age so try to ensure you talk to them on the right level. Having good communication with the school in advance of your visit will help you with this. It's also important to be clear what the children might already know.
- Bringing in resources, equipment and visual aids that relate to your job are a really good way to engage the children. The use of ICT might also be helpful. Children respond well to the opportunity to handle resources first hand. Plan lots of questions and if appropriate provide the opportunity for children to help you. Knowing the children's names is useful in a small group situation so you might want to ask them to wear name badges or even introduce themselves.
- It's worth remembering that the children will also be really interested in you as a person and the job you do so do feel free to include this in the material you cover.
- It's worth checking your approximate timings so that you will be able to get your key messages across but also leave time for questions and answers.

On the big day

- Give yourself plenty of time to arrive, catch your breath and get yourself fully organised. The school should have a member of staff to meet you at reception on your arrival. If you need anything setting up, any materials sourcing or wifi etc make sure you have given the school notice in advance.
- The school and children will be looking forward to your visit and will do their best to make sure everything goes according to plan but remember schools are busy places so please make allowances for this.
- When you are with the children be yourself. Speak open and honestly, don't be afraid to give your opinions and try to keep good eye contact.
- Avoid any inappropriate language or content which might offend or upset.
- Try to be enthusiastic in your manner. Children respond positively to this.
- Do involve the children in any way that suits your presentation. Planning in advance and liaising with the teacher will help to get this right.
- Feel free to go with the flow if the children begin to take you in a slightly different direction to what you have planned. By watching their responses to you can get a good idea of how well things are going. It's sometimes worth having some short activities up your sleeve just in case!
- You might want to end your session with a follow up challenge for the children to complete and send to you. Of course that's entirely up to you.
- The member of staff who is supporting you knows the children well. They will manage any inappropriate behaviour and help you if things are not going as you hoped.
- It is important that you are never left alone in a room with the children for both your protection and theirs. It is the schools responsibility to ensure this is effectively managed.
- The golden rule is if you are not sure about anything please ask.

After your talk

- Take a breath, relax and have a coffee!
- Do ask the staff for feedback but also feel free to suggest things that could have been done differently from your point of view.
- When you get chance complete the feedback on the Inspiring the Future website. This is really helpful for us and other volunteers.
- Maybe consider the possibility of developing a closer relationship with the school or suggest other ways you could support. Of course this is entirely up to you. Some volunteers enjoy doing a one off session others sometimes like to do a bit more. Whichever you choose the children and school are really grateful for you offering your time for Primary Futures.