

# **HAPPY HOUSE VOLUNTEER AND VISITORS GUIDELINES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Happy House is run on a strong foundation of love and family in the interests of all – children, staff, friends, visitors and volunteers. We welcome visitors and volunteers as they bring with them their skills and open a window on the outside world to our family. We always do our best to ensure that they make, and get, the most out of their time with us.

The interests of our children are paramount and we never lose sight of the fact that we are exclusively child-focused. Keeping the children safe and helping each one to develop into a healthy, confident young adult is our priority.

## **VOLUNTEER PREPARATION AND CONTRIBUTION**

Before volunteering with us we ask you to understand the preparation required physically, psychologically and also financially.

We would advise that you seek advice from your General Practitioner or Travel Clinic if any vaccinations or medications are recommended e.g. Tetanus Injection booster, Malaria medication. Although there are several pharmacies in Watamu and also clinics with medical staff, please ensure that you bring adequate supplies of any prescribed medication you may require. There are also dentists in Watamu and Malindi but you may wish to visit your own dental practitioner before travelling.

Many of the children you will be working with will have experienced neglect, abuse or trauma. Some may display signs of attachment disorder or separation anxiety. The majority welcome attention and playing games with you and the younger ones enjoy a cuddle. Make the most of the time you spend with the children but be prepared to say goodbye which many volunteers find difficult.

All volunteers are required to show their commitment to our Happy House family, which is entirely dependent on charity, by raising 500 Pounds Sterling (or equivalent) before they arrive, regardless of the duration of their stay. They may do this however they wish, by taking part in a sponsored challenge, holding pub quizzes or similar events or by asking friends and family for donations. Any activities organised helps to raise the profile of the Happy House and hopefully increases interest in child sponsorship. We can help by providing publicity and information material. We do not accept that any funds raised for the Happy House children are used for personal expenses such as flights, accommodation etc. The money must be paid into the charity account through Just Giving before departure.

We must emphasise that there is a great difference between being a tourist and being a volunteer when coming to the Happy House. Tourists are on holiday whilst volunteers are coming to work with us to benefit our children and are expected to comply with the Happy House policies and procedures.

## **GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines are to help you understand the Happy House way before you arrive, what to expect from us and what we expect from you – always with our children's needs and interests at the forefront of all we do.

### **Guided Tour**

On the day of arrival all volunteers are taken for a guided tour where everything is clearly explained. This includes the home itself plus the Happy House School where volunteers spend most of their time. You may be required to help in the office, classroom, library, computer room, or grounds depending on your interests and also the needs of our family.

### **Personal Property**

Please ensure that you make proper arrangements with the administrator should you wish to leave your handbag, back pack or any other personal belongings in the office.

### **Donations of goods and gifts**

If you are bringing donations of goods for our home please give them to the Director or Administrator for proper recording and disbursement. Please do not directly distribute any items without office guidance since we document and account for everything that is donated, whether money or goods. It is not appropriate to make gifts to staff.

### **Clothes**

Please come to work dressed appropriately. The work is hot and dusty so be prepared for your clothes to get dirty. You may dress casually but please do not wear revealing clothes. Keep jewellery to a minimum

### **Water and Food**

You may drink the water at the Happy House but we advise you to provide your own bottles water. If you are here at mealtimes you will share what the children are eating. This will be local food such as beans and chapatti, ugali and greens, rice and kumba.

## **Trips and Outings**

As we said in the beginning, everything is done as a family. We cannot allow any trips for any child/children which may mean others are left behind. When our children go on a trip or outing they do it as a family unless the activity is age specific.

## **Emotional Attachment**

Children need a cuddle and loving them is part of our everyday work here. However, we would ask you to understand that constantly picking up and cuddling a child can be detrimental to them and impact negatively when you leave. It is not acceptable to develop a favourite. If a child gets special treats or more attention the other children are obviously left feeling unloved or unworthy. We avoid favouritism at all costs because we want every one of our children to feel loved and secure.

## **Photographs and Networking**

When you are volunteering please remember that it is not always appropriate to be using a camera. Before you take photographs of any children please ask for guidance from the office and permission from the child. Not all the children at Happy House School live at the Happy House. Many live with parents who pay school fees. We must respect the privacy of all the children and photographs of non Happy House children must not be posted on Facebook or other social media sites. There is a Social Media Policy. Equally, if you are writing updates to your friends please respect confidentiality and the privacy of our children and our staff. Do not disclose their backgrounds etc and, if you are in any doubt, seek advice from the administrator.

## **Attendance**

You will be expected to work in a team while you are with us and therefore you will be timetabled into your tasks and asked to ensure that you are there in good time and do not leave ahead of your allotted time. The days and times will be agreed with you in advance. Just as in any workplace, if you need to take time off for any reason, you must make arrangements with the office so that arrangements to cover you can be made. If you are sick or unable to come in, please phone in as early as possible.

## **Complaints**

If you are unhappy about anything whilst you are at the Happy House or have any concerns about the way we operate, please discuss your issue with the administrator, not with staff members or other volunteers.

## **Points Worth Noting**

Children are not allowed to play with your mobile phone, tablet, kindle, camera etc. If they want to look at pictures please guide them through this.

Discourage the children from playing with or trying to braid your hair – play a game or read with them instead.

Kindly do not carry around children who are capable of walking and running – encourage babies to crawl and learn walking skills.

In school, avoid disrupting classes by interrupting or sitting very close to the children as they could become distracted, show off or try to sit on your knee. Encourage them to learn for themselves, 'do with' rather than 'do for' so that they can become independent.

If a child needs correcting in any way it must be done lovingly and encouragingly as we are continuously striving to build their self-esteem.

We are in full support of child participation appropriate to their age and capabilities.

As a team player, remember that your services are meant to compliment the efforts of the paid staff and not relieving them of their duties. Kindly insist on working under the guidance of a staff member at all times. In school for instance, do not agree to teach a class if you are not qualified and also if the class teacher is not with you.

## **And Finally**

We really appreciate your interest in our Happy House and want you to enjoy and get the very best from your time with us. By working together, we will learn from each other and help our children grow and flourish in the process.

I have read and understood the above guidelines and wish to comply fully.

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please scan a signed copy and return to the Happy House with your completed Application Form, Letter of Good Conduct (DBS, AccessNI or equivalent criminal record check). The financial contribution should be paid into the charity account prior to your departure*