



Computer Partners
Volunteer Handbook

Dear Volunteer,

Congratulations on Becoming a Computer Partner!

Thank you for your interest in the Tower Hamlets Computer Partners Scheme. This handbook has been prepared by the Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership, a charity that promotes partnerships between businesses and schools in Tower Hamlets.

This handbook will provide you with background information on the scheme, strategies and activities to use in the sessions, hints and tips for a successful partnership and information on current approaches to Information Technology education. It is designed as an aid to support and provide guidance when you are working with children.

Computer Partners are highly valued in schools and they are in great demand. To support their learning, young people need interaction with caring adults who give them support and encouragement. It is generally agreed that a committed adult can be a crucial factor in encouraging pupils to see ICT as fun and exciting. Support, praise for their efforts and patience are key ingredients in a young person's progress. This is what a Computer Partner volunteer – you- can provide.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for giving your time to support pupils to develop their ICT skills and improve their confidence and self esteem.

Our thanks also go to the organisations that support this project and to ReedSmith Richards Butler for sponsoring this handbook.

If you have any further queries or would like to contact the Tower Hamlets EBP please do get in touch.

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INTRODUCTION

Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership

Tower Hamlets EBP is a registered charity established in 1991. Our aim is to encourage the private sector to work with schools in Tower Hamlets on a range of projects designed to raise achievement and to the opportunity for pupils to improve their basic and work related skills. THEBP is part of the national EBP network and is funded by the public and private sectors.

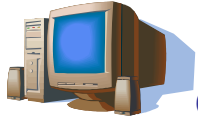
London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is an inner London borough including areas such as Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Mile End, Limehouse, Stepney, Wapping, Poplar and the Isle of Dogs.

Tower Hamlets is one of the most deprived boroughs in the country. This is indicated in the schools by the fact that 66% of pupils qualify for free school meals which suggests that their household annual income is less than £13,500. 64% of people use English as an additional language and unemployment is also high at 12% in comparison to a national average of 8%. Poverty is not just a financial issue but many pupils in Tower Hamlets suffer a poverty of experience and are not always exposed to the opportunities and pathways potentially available to them.

The area is marked by the distinct contrast between the two major financial districts of The City and Canary Wharf which sit alongside such an area of deprivation. Business volunteers really can make a difference to local schools and the pupils that attend them and be a part of building a more cohesive community.





COMPUTER PARTNERS SCHEME



The Computer Partners Scheme was set up to provide schools with an additional resource to support pupils with ICT and also help raise aspirations and motivation.

Computer Partners are people from the world of work who have given up their time to help a young person improve their ICT skills. Through this scheme, volunteers from the business community visit a school for half an hour every week and are matched with two pupils who they work with each session. As the pupils and volunteer get to know each other a mentoring relationship often grows and makes the partnership more special. Volunteers are not expected to fulfil the role of a teacher or parent but are someone from outside the family and school who supports and encourages the pupils.

A company co-ordinator and school co-ordinator are nominated to be the key points of contact for the partnership. These roles are crucial for the success of the scheme.

Aims

The aims of the scheme are to:

- Support schools in raising achievement in ICT.
- Improve young people's ICT skills.
- Support the development of interpersonal skills for targeted pupils.
- Develop young people's confidence and motivation to learn.
- Give young people a positive insight into the world of work.

The very special thing about Computer Partners is the time that the individuals spend with an adult. At school there is often very little opportunity for pupils to receive this individual attention and for some it isn't always possible to get this support at home.

Age and Selection of Pupils

The majority of Computer Partners schemes target years 3 to 6, ages 7 to 11. At this age students should have basic ICT skills but need to further extend them so that they are well prepared for the transition to secondary school.

School co-ordinators are asked to select those pupils they feel would benefit most from taking part. These are often pupils who are underachieving, do not have access to a computer at home or would benefit from one to one support and increased confidence.

Time Commitment

The sessions are half an hour long, one lunchtime a week during term time. All sessions take place at school so travelling time needs to be taken into consideration. We ask that volunteers commit to one full term (approximately 10 weeks) but find that the majority of our Partners volunteer for a the whole academic year or more.

It is important for the school and pupil that volunteers attend regularly. If a volunteer is unable to attend on any week, we recommend that they notify their company co-ordinator so that the school may be informed of their absence. If you don't think that you can realistically make at least 7 out of the 10 weekly sessions each term then it is advisable that you team up with another colleague and work with the same children on alternate weeks to reduce the time commitment.

Benefits

Being a volunteer on this scheme is a very rewarding experience. As well as giving a lot to the pupils you will be supporting you will gain from this experience personally. Not only for current volunteers talk positively about their input to the local community but they also report feeling more confident to address a range of audiences and feeling more motivated at work.

To the pupils

- *Meeting interested and committed adults.*
- *Individual support and attention.*
- *Regular opportunities to practise computer skills.*
- *One to one discussion to improve confidence with computers.*

To the volunteer

- *Contributing to the achievement of young people.*
- *Collaborating with colleagues on a worthwhile project.*
- *Opportunity to do voluntary work with young people.*
- *Doing something positive at lunchtime.*
- *Developing interpersonal and communication skills.*

To the employer

- *Raised motivation and morale among employees.*
- *Providing opportunities for self-development.*
- *Promoting team building.*
- *Building a positive company image both internally and externally.*
- *Developing time management skills.*
- *Fulfilling responsibilities to the local community.*

Ongoing Support

We aim to periodically review how schemes are going. Reviews meetings are organised by periodically between coordinators and the EBP. If you feel your scheme requires an urgent review please contact your company coordinator with your concerns.

Criminal Records Bureau Police Checks

All volunteers are required to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. Forms must be completed and submitted to the EBP before beginning the scheme. Please pay particular attention to the guidelines provided when completing the form. When we receive your completed form and appropriate identification, we will verify your details and submit the form to the CRB.

The CRB check is processed under confidential cover, queries and results are not disclosed to the employer. Once the CRB check has been completed the CRB will send two copies of the clearance document – one directly to the volunteer at their home address and one to THEBP. Clearance documents remain valid for three years and are only valid with the organisation through which they are processed

Child Protection

Volunteers need to protect their professional integrity in every practical way. Under no circumstances should volunteers be alone in a closed room with a pupil, both for their own protection and that of the pupil and school.

Volunteers should not initiate personal contact with the pupil. It is acceptable to shake hands or do 'high fives' but not to have pupils sitting on laps or hugs.

If a volunteer has a concern over the pupil's welfare or the pupil divulges information of a sensitive nature to the volunteer, the volunteer must pass this information onto the school co-ordinator or Headteacher on the same day. Volunteers must not agree to keep a secret with a pupil.

Evaluation

Each year we ask the pupils, volunteers, school coordinator and company co-ordinators for feedback on the scheme, including key benefits and any improvements that could be made.

The EBP carries out annual evaluations at the end of each academic year. Questionnaires are sent to all volunteers and co-ordinators to complete of the school year for volunteers to complete and if any serious issues are raised it is likely that we will suggest a review meeting should be held.





COMPUTER PARTNERS WORKBOOKS

The Computer Partners workbooks were created for volunteers to work through with the students they are supporting. The areas covered by the workbook are:

- Introduction
- Word Processing
- Spreadsheets
- PowerPoint
- Internet

The workbooks are made to assist the Microsoft Office Software and work best when using these programmes.

Activities

The activities at the front of each pack are broken down into the following areas:

The red tasks begin an activity and should be completed by all students.

Those who complete the tasks easily, or want a further challenge should complete the blue tasks.

The green tasks are for pupils who have complete the two other tasks and still want to know more.

Hints 'n' Tips

These suggestions can be used to help a student work through the activities or as a standalone lesson.

Checklists

There are checklists at the back of each workbook. These can either be used to ensure that student has learnt everything in the pack or before you begin to assess the pupil's level of familiarity with the application.

Quizzes

The quizzes at the end of the packs are a fun way to finish a session and ensure that the pupils have understood the application.

Certificates

On successful completion of the course and the quiz, the certificates on the back page can be photocopied, signed by the adult and given to the student to recognise their achievement.

Volunteers can work through the activities in a variety of ways. By reading the activity then using the Hint 'n' Tips pages to guide you through the task followed by trying the quiz and finally, awarding the certificate. Alternatively you can dip in and out of the activities and

just use the checklists, quizzes or Hints 'n' Tips pages whilst using an alternative activity. Further activities for sessions can be found at <http://www.thebp.org/activities.htm>

HINTS AND TIPS

For Building a Successful Relationship:

Listen

This is primarily a scheme for children to interact with older people, often from different backgrounds to themselves. One of the most important parts is getting to know your partner, finding out what they like and don't like, and building a friendly relationship with them. Take time to listen to what they are telling you. The majority of children consider their partner to be a 'friend' which, at their age, is a sacred title only given to very deserving people! If you manage to become friends with your partner, they will feel more relaxed and their learning and development will be increased.



Be flexible

Schools are run very differently to businesses. Day to day plans are subject to last minute change, which is sometimes not very well communicated. Times change, children change, rooms change, children and school coordinators often aren't where they should be when you're expecting them etc. As a volunteer, you'll need to be able to deal with all of this, and be flexible.

Try to be firm

Children work better when ground rules are set and are stuck to. Don't be overly strict with your partner, but do let them know from day one what sort of behaviour you expect, when you expect them to be where and when, and what you intend to do in the sessions. Don't let the children take control of you. Sounds silly, but it can happen, so make sure you let them know from day one who is boss!

Have fun!

These sessions are supposed to primarily be fun for the children. You should let the children know this, so that they don't think it's just academic skills they're supposed to be developing. If they think they're having fun, they won't even realise that they are actually learning lots of new skills!

For Successful Sessions:

Show commitment

Attend as often as possible to avoid the children's disappointment and if you can't make it ensure that you inform the school, or your company co-ordinator and the pupils you work with.

Encourage the children

Ask questions and try to involve the children in lots of conversation about what they're doing. Don't be tempted to take control of the mouse and keyboard, let the children do the work as far as possible.

Take your time

Don't try and push ahead too quickly, repeat activities as often as necessary so your partners become really confident with each new skill they learn.

Give lots of praise

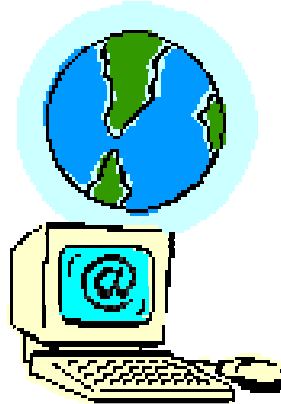
This builds confidence as the children have a go at lots of new things and encourages approach activities with a 'can do' attitude.

Be positive

Always try and phrase your sentences positively, and you'll be surprised at the constructive response you get!

Be inclusive

Make sure that all pupils are participating in the session and that a dominant pupil isn't taking over and the activities.



SAFE USE OF THE INTERNET

It is essential that the children you are working with are aware of a few basic computer rules for safe use of the internet.

Tips for Young People

Chat rooms and messaging can be great fun, but remember, you never really know who you are talking to online. It could be someone trying to trick you, or someone really dangerous. Here are some tips to help you keep safe:

1. Never use your real name in chat rooms, make up a nickname to use when you're online.
2. Never tell anyone anything personal about yourself or your family especially your address and telephone number or the school or clubs you go to. Even if somebody tells you about themselves, never tell them personal things about you.
3. Never send people you meet online photos of yourself or your family.
4. If you arrange to meet up with someone you've only spoken to online, remember that they might not be who they said they were. Only meet people if you really have to, arrange to meet in a public place and take along an adult with you, your friend should do this too, because they don't know who you are either!
5. Never respond to nasty or rude messages, and never send any either! If you feel uncomfortable about a conversation save a record of it and stop the conversation. Then you can show someone and ask what they think.

Be careful with any email attachments or links that people send you, they might contain nasty images, or 'viruses' that could damage your computer. So if you don't know who it's from, don't open it.

Avoid sites that are meant for adults. You might be curious, but sometimes these sites can be difficult to get out of, they can cost more on the phone bill, and they can detect your email address and start sending you stuff you really don't want to get. If you see rude pictures where they shouldn't be, let an adult know so they can get them removed.

Don't let the internet take over your life! Keep up your other interests and try and use the Internet with friends and family, not just on your own.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Am I making a difference to the pupil?

Pupils learn in different ways and at different rates and because of the external factors involved in their progress such as parental input and attendance it is difficult to attribute success in ICT solely to involvement in the scheme. However feedback from the schools involved is extremely positive.

Do the pupils feel stigmatized being part of the scheme?

Schools will identify pupils they think will benefit most have having a Computer Partner but the pupils are not forced to take part. Feedback suggests that the pupils look forward to and enjoy the sessions each week.

What should I do if the pupil does not turn up for a session?

You may wish to call the school on the day of the session to ensure the pupil you work with is present. If your pupil(s) often forgot to come to the session talk to the school co-coordinator and ask if it possible to arrange a reminder system.

How will I know what computer skills the pupil already has?

The easiest way to judge the children's ability is to watch them tackling a variety of tasks. If you want to know more about what skills they should have, or their curriculum targets for this year, then ask the school coordinator for a curriculum tree for ICT. Either that or have a look on the National Curriculum website <http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/> and find the targets for key stage two.

What should I do if I don't feel like I'm getting anywhere?

Remember that children progress at different rates and they may need time to consolidate new ideas through lots of practice before they make their next breakthrough. Offer lots of encouragement and praise, let the pupil know what they have been doing well. If you feel you have exhausted every method of trying to engage the child you should approach the school coordinator for some advice. They may offer you strategies for coping with the child, or they may find you another pupil to work with who is easier to engage.

What should I do if the child's concentration is wavering?

Change the activity. If a child is getting bored, you will soon know it! They'll become fidgety and easily distracted. If this happens, try to vary the sessions more and to re-engage the child. You could even turn the computer off and have a chat or work on a pencil and paper activity for part of the session instead.

Why don't I get more feedback from the School?

Many volunteers would like confirmation from their school that they are making a difference. The feedback we receive from schools involved suggests that volunteers that attend regularly make a considerable contribution to children's IT skills and self confidence. However, on a day to day basis many schools are not able to communicate this to volunteers. An end of term review meeting is helpful in providing feedback to the volunteers and to the school.

What should I do if the pupil doesn't want to come to the sessions?

Talk to the school co-coordinator. It may be that the lure of the playground is too great and it might be more beneficial to work with another pupil.

What should I do if I am concerned about a pupil's wellbeing?

If a pupil tells you something that worries you, never agree to keep it a secret. Discuss your concerns with the coordinator or a teacher at the school before you leave.

What happens if I am unable to keep to the time commitment?

Don't feel bad about it. Talk to the co-coordinator at your company about the possibility of becoming a reserve volunteer. If you decide you need to leave the scheme altogether it is important that the pupil knows that you will not be coming back so that they are able to say goodbye to you.

Where can I find out about term dates?

www.thebp.org has a list of Tower Hamlets term dates but you should check with each school as they may differ slightly and they will be able to inform you of school trips and INSET days.

What should I do if a pupil gets too attached?

Occasionally a pupil may ask questions you do not feel comfortable with or they may become too attached to you. As the adult in this partnership you should be friendly but not over familiar. Remember that children are still developing social skills. All session must take part in school unless the Head teacher and parent are involved.

What are Special Educational Needs?

The term 'SEN' is very broad, it could mean that a pupil has difficulty with any of the following:

- All school work.
- Reading, writing, number work or understanding information.
- Making friends or relating to adults.
- Organising themselves.
- Some kind of sensory or physical needs which may affect them in school.

Pupils making slower progress or having particular difficulties in one area may be given extra help or different lessons to help them succeed. Each school has a nominated SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-coordinator) to help address these issues. ICT skills are particularly valuable to pupils with special educational needs. Computers can help them to overcome some of their barriers, for example their ability to write legibly, and can help to raise their achievement.