

## Oxford Hands-On Science Child Protection Policy

Oxford Hands-On Science (OxHOS) is a volunteer organisation run by students from the University of Oxford, working in partnership with Cambridge Hands-On Science (CHaOS) at the University of Cambridge, who have been running successful hands-on science events aimed at children and families for over ten years. For a number of years CHaOS have been requiring all of our volunteers who visit schools to apply for DBS checks, a practice that's been far more rigorous than the legal requirements or past guidelines, and this is a policy which will be continued by OxHOS. In order to explain our approach to child protection in more detail, this document outlines our principles of child protection, and the practices that enable us to implement these principles.

Please contact us by emailing [contactoxhos@gmail.com](mailto:contactoxhos@gmail.com) if your school requires further clarification on our policy, or if you have differing requirements.

### **1. General Principles**

- i. Most of the visitors to OxHOS events are under 18 years of age and thus OxHOS owes them a duty of care as children.
- ii. OxHOS has a number of practices in place to help safeguard children, outlined in detail in the rest of this policy, which are in accordance with current guidelines from Ofsted and other voluntary organisations that work with children.
  - o If schools or other hosts require additional measures to those described in this document in order to fulfil their own Child Protection Policies, then OxHOS must be informed of these at least 2 weeks in advance of the date of the visit.
- iii. If a school or host requests additional measures to comply with their own child protection policy, OxHOS will consider whether these requirements can be accommodated before a visit is confirmed.

### **2: DBS Disclosures**

All OxHOS volunteers working in schools will either:

- i. Have applied for an Enhanced DBS Disclosure specific to working with children through OxHOS.
- ii. Have shown the OxHOS Child Protection Officer (or another authorised member of the OxHOS committee) an Enhanced DBS Disclosure (specific for working with children) from another organisation, dated within the preceding 24 months. Such a DBS disclosure will then be valid for the purposes of OxHOS events until 42 months after its issue date.
- iii. Hold an Enhanced DBS Disclosure specific to working with children applied for through OxHOS within the preceding 42 months.

As it is unlikely that our volunteers will be in contact with the same children on multiple occasions, and should not have unsupervised contact with these children, this is well above the legal requirements.

For public events, volunteers are not required to have applied for a DBS disclosure. This is because contact with children is not 'regular' (as it consists of one day only). This is in accordance with the Ofsted 'Guidance for section 5 inspectors on safeguarding children' which states that "an enhanced disclosure is required for staff appointed, including volunteers, who come into regular contact with children", where contact is expected to be with the same children on a regular basis which is not usually true for OxHOS events.

We will however, ask demonstrators who apply to help at more than two OxHOS public events in the same month to apply for an enhanced DBS check (which again is more rigorous than the legal requirements).

DBS checks contain personal information, and as such may only be handled by authorised persons. In accordance with the data protection act, completed checks are destroyed, and OxHOS may only hold information concerning the individual's:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Form reference number
- DBS Check issue date
- DBS check date received
- Whether the check has passed or failed

An individual is considered to have automatically failed a DBS check if any offences are listed under the "protection of children" section. Offences recorded in other sections of the DBS disclosure do not necessarily prevent an individual from volunteering with OxHOS, and the decision whether to pass such an individual is made at the discretion of the committee.

### **3. Practical measures to protect children at OxHOS events**

OxHOS ensures as far as possible that volunteers are never alone with children. Precautions ensuring this include:

- i. There are always at least two demonstrators in any area (including any dark room space) at all times.
- ii. Volunteers will only use staff toilets in schools.
- iii. All volunteers are made aware that they should avoid being alone with children.
- iv. At school and roadshow events all OxHOS demonstrators are required to wear and, under most circumstances, to display an official OxHOS T-shirt in order to make them clearly identifiable as affiliated with OxHOS. [NB: One example where we would allow the T-shirt to be less visible is if demonstrators request to wear a coat if outside]

### **Venue and experiment safety**

This is paramount and assessed according to the OxHOS Safety Policy.

### **Supervision of visitors and their behaviour**

- i. School visits: OxHOS require that at least one member of school staff is supervising the students and it is the responsibility of that member of staff to ensure that the students are behaving appropriately. If an OxHOS volunteer feels that a student's behaviour is disruptive or causing a risk to him/herself or others, they should request assistance from a teacher immediately. As all OxHOS demonstrators are volunteers, they reserve the right to ask for a student to be removed from the event, or for the event to be stopped entirely if it is felt that poor behaviour is posing risks to the safety of the students or volunteers.
- ii. Public events: OxHOS requests that all children visiting events are accompanied by an adult. However, it is sometimes the case that children arrive unaccompanied and it is difficult to refuse them access. If it can be determined that the child's parents/guardians are aware of their location and have given permission for them to be out alone, they may attend the

event provided that their behaviour is not disruptive or unsafe. If their behaviour is disruptive or unsafe, they should be asked to leave and appropriate assistance called (e.g. venue caretaker, police) if this becomes problematic. If all else fails and safety is being compromised, the event should be closed.

There may be some unaccompanied adult visitors to OxHOS events. In the unlikely event that volunteers consider an adult visitor to be behaving inappropriately, the visitor should be asked to leave. If this becomes problematic, appropriate assistance should be called (e.g. venue caretaker, police), and if all else fails and safety is considered to be compromised, the event should be closed.

- iii. Volunteer behaviour: If it is considered that a volunteer is behaving inappropriately, their actions will be questioned and advice on appropriate behaviour and precautions given. If a problem persists, the OxHOS committee reserve the right to ask a volunteer to leave the event and refuse them access to future events as a volunteer.

#### **4. Photography**

When possible, OxHOS committee members take photographs at events to use for publicity purposes. OxHOS understands that photography is an important Child Protection issue. OxHOS volunteers are informed of the issues surrounding photography and are advised not to take photographs including children during events unless they are taking them specifically for use by OxHOS in accordance with the guidelines below.

- i. When visiting schools, permission to take photographs will be obtained from a member of school staff in advance with further confirmation and details obtained on the day of the visit. OxHOS understands that there may be some specific children within a school for whom photography permission is not available, and will avoid taking photographs including these children if they are pointed out. Alternatively, it may be more convenient for school staff to take the photographs themselves and subsequently provide us with some images if possible.
- ii. Public events: any volunteer taking photographs including children will carry 'Photography Permission Forms' (modelled on those used by the Cambridge Science Festival and the Wellcome Trust) and, where possible, approach the parent or guardian of children clearly identifiable in any photograph to obtain written and signed consent to use the photographs as described on the form. Notes will be made on the form to link it to specific children/images (and ideally the form photographed with the relevant children to ensure correct identification), and completed forms will be kept on file. Of photographs in which children are clearly identifiable, only those for which consent has been given will be used in publicity material. Other photographs in which children are clearly identifiable will not be used.

#### **5. Allegations against volunteers**

There are occasions when volunteers working with children are accused of abusing people under their care. All such allegations must be taken seriously in the best interests of the child and the volunteer. The potential of allegations arising is discussed with all OxHOS volunteers, as is appropriate behaviour and conduct to minimise misunderstandings which may lead to allegations, such as:

- i) Ensuring that volunteers are never alone with children wherever possible.
- ii) Avoiding physical contact with children unless in the case of emergency, such as restraint or medical attention.

In the event of an alleged incident of this nature occurring during an OxHOS event, the volunteer in question would immediately be suspended from the event, and the OxHOS committee would seek advice from the local police. The individual would remain suspended from OxHOS activities until allegations were resolved.

## **6. Suspicions and Reporting**

If a volunteer suspects that abuse of a child has occurred (either through disclosure, behaviour, or signs of injury) they must report it to an OxHOS committee member.

- i) In a school setting, the committee member will then report the suspicion to a member of school staff.
- ii) In a public event setting, reports of suspected abuse can be made either to the local social services, or to the NSPCC telephone/email/online helpline. It is not essential to know a child's name in order to report them via the NSPCC helpline.
- iii) If a child makes a disclosure to a volunteer, the volunteer must remain calm, listen attentively, not ask leading questions, and at an appropriate moment explain to the child that it will be necessary to share the information with the appropriate person.

## **7. Additional requirements by schools**

In previous years, schools have requested us to take additional Child Protection measures to those described above. Whilst we have consulted a number of official documents published by Ofsted during the formation of this Policy and do not consider that there should be any requirement for additional measures to be taken, we understand that schools may still request them. Some examples of these requests, and guidance for the OxHOS committee, are listed below.

- i) List 99 checks: whilst Ofsted states that schools should conduct a 'List 99' check on individuals working with children, it should be noted that a 'List 99 check' is incorporated in the Enhanced DBS check carried out on all volunteers. If schools require volunteers to be subjected to a 'List 99' check on arrival, this may be possible but only if sufficient notice has been provided (see below) as official identification documents are required from each volunteer on the day of the visit.
- ii) Identity badges: OxHOS volunteers will, wherever possible, wear official OxHOS T-shirts during school visits and public events. Whilst we do not have our own official identity badges, we are happy to wear school visitor passes or similar if required.
- iii) Staff supervision of volunteers: in the past, we have visited schools which have insisted that all volunteers must be accompanied by a member of staff at all times when on the premises. This is entirely impractical, as there can be as many as 17 demonstrators who need to move frequently between classrooms, vehicles and facilities throughout the day. Therefore we will avoid visiting schools which insist on this policy.

If schools or other hosts require any such measures to be taken in order to fulfil their own Child Protection Policies, then OxHOS must be informed at least 2 weeks in advance of the visit. OxHOS will then consider whether these requirements can be accommodated.

**If you have any queries please email us via [contactoxhos@gmail.com](mailto:contactoxhos@gmail.com).**