

Volunteering with School Aid



Our Greatest Asset

School Aid is a volunteer-led organisation. Apart from logistics and office management, both of which require the commitment of full-time professionals, we are contingent upon:

- the goodwill of our Patrons and Trustees
- schools across the UK who generously donate books and stationery
- businesses that pledge their services in order to store and deliver them to us
- dedicated volunteers who pack the books ready for shipment
- big-hearted sponsors who contribute to the logistical costs of getting them to Africa, others who store them once they get there and more who transport them to their final destinations
- the enthusiastic helpers who welcome and distribute the donations

Volunteers are at the heart of who we are. Our culture, our sense of purpose, and the skills we possess have developed out of the extraordinary generosity of other people.

Our Greatest Strength

Our strength is in our flexibility. We look at what we need, we ask for input and as a team we put the right mechanisms in place. We're not afraid of change, in fact our achievements have come about because we adapt to what is being asked of us – from the needs of our volunteers through to the wishes of the children we support.

Our Offering to the Community

The importance of our volunteer base cannot be over emphasised and we have taken our time to become an inclusive organisation, offering an individual experience.

A great deal of thought has been put into how our volunteers can benefit from us, as we benefit from them. People from all walks of life, with all sorts of abilities, and all types of needs can support us, and in return we offer:

- The chance to support a really good cause
- Make new connections and meet other like-minded people
- An opportunity to change another person's life
 - 450,685 high quality books have been sent to improve the education of over 304,327 learners.

- An enjoyable social environment
 - Christmas drinks
 - Summer party
 - Volunteer awards
 - Communications week – School Aid reports back on progress
 - School Aid Fun Run
 - Film nights
- Interesting and useful Internships
- The chance to join one of our Community Fund-Raising Committees
- Career advancement from learning new skills
- A stepping stone to full employment after a career break
 - Our admin volunteers often return to full-time employment after working with us
- Sponsorship opportunities for local businesses
 - Chewton Rose sponsor the School Aid Fun Run
- A worthwhile way to complete the volunteering section of the DofE Award
- Family Fun Days
 - During holidays children of all ages and their families can be safely introduced to the world of volunteering
- Reduction in landfill
 - Schools can discard their out-of-date books easily and cheaply
 - Book publishers can get rid of overruns
 - Individuals can recycle their unwanted books
 - Businesses can recycle out-of-date stationery
- Personalised talks and fundraising
 - We present at school assemblies, Rotary Clubs, the WI, Guiding and Scouting
 - We can personalise fund raising events for schools through our Project Pencil campaign

And volunteering is good for your health! A special health report published by Harvard Health Publications found that the more people volunteered, the happier they were.

Our Wider Appeal

The Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe was one of the very first schools to support us some 13 years ago, collecting books, holding discussion meetings and packing resources for our cause. School children donating to and volunteering at satellite packing schools such as RGS enable us to reach a much wider audience, and at the same time offer practical and more local opportunities for them to get involved in charity work.

Miss H. R. Munday, Assistant Head at the Royal Grammar School agrees how important it is:

“The Royal Grammar School is proud of its long association with School Aid. Our students ... have learned much about African schools and the very different and difficult situations other young people find themselves in. They have an increased insight into how fortunate they are to receive free education and how important it is to volunteer their time to help other people.”



Our Impact

I can come and go as I please

Cherrie Rigby is one of our long standing volunteers. As a well-travelled grandmother with family no longer living in the area, Cherrie wanted to give her spare time to a good cause and meet new people.

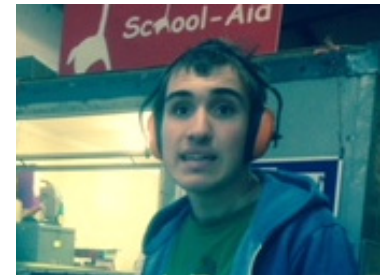


She joins us every Tuesday from 11:00 till 4:00; she packs boxes; chats and plans with the many friends she's made; and she enjoys the 'renowned biscuit collection' that comes out at coffee breaks. Sometimes she brings her laptop in when it's playing up – a few moments in the School Aid office and it's back up and running.

"School Aid is like a family," says Cherie, "I've made new friends, I can come and go as I please, and I really enjoy being part of the team that helps out at fund raising events such as the recent Film Night."

I want to come every week

Autistic volunteer Joe Charman is 19 years old, and he and his Mum Karen have been coming to School Aid for two years. A quick drive through the car park on his first visit has now grown into a weekly session, where he independently packs boxes and stacks them ready for shipment.



Mum Karen says, "Joe loves working at School Aid. It makes him feel useful and helpful, and it gets him out and mixing with other people. The other volunteers are great with him, whilst School Aid has given him the tools and the space to develop at a pace that suits his needs.

Coming here has struck a chord with Joe and he really looks forward to every visit."

I feel I'm volunteering for something really worthwhile

Kirsty Dunkerton, a local 16-year-old, has joined School Aid in order to complete her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. Her lengthy stint will mean for 2 hours every 2 weeks, Kirsty will spend the next year helping out in our warehouse and getting to know what it's like to work at a busy charity.



"My Mum found School Aid on the internet, and from their website it looked like the perfect voluntary opportunity," reported Kirsty. "It's a great way for me to help the community, and such a good cause.

The staff and other volunteers are so chilled and lovely, and they had no problems accommodating my hours."

With School Aid's help, I'm going to be a nurse

Mary Kola is 11 years old and she lives in Mkungumwe Village in Malawi. She and her sister are the youngest set of 3 twins, plus another sibling, all living with their mother who is the major breadwinner of the family.



Every week Mary attends a School Aid reading club which she believes will help her to reach her goal of becoming a nurse. She is hardworking and well-behaved, she never misses school unless she is sick, and her literacy has significantly improved. Her teacher believes that all this is as a result of her attending the reading clubs.

At home, Mary likes to share what she's learnt with her mother, who has been particularly impressed by her improved use of English since attending the reading clubs. Her mother brings home books which Mary reads to them both.

Our Summary

In 2018, our twentieth anniversary year, we were honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest given to volunteer groups across the UK. This prestigious and lifetime award recognises exceptional work done by volunteer groups in their communities, and is a unique national honour created by Her Majesty to mark the Golden Jubilee in 2002.

School Aid is an established and important part of the community in South Bucks because it can offer flexible voluntary roles that are interesting and informal. Many of our volunteers stay with us for years, often returning for social events long after they've earned their well-deserved retirement from voluntary work.



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**