

Volunteering in Bristol Schools

It is 'All Change and All Systems Go' in the Bristol schools team in RSVP. We now have 3 schools organisers who between them cover North & West Bristol (Mina Malpass), North & East Bristol (Judy Harris) and South Bristol (Sue Andresen). Volunteers are organised into areas according to the location of the schools they are helping in. This has allowed us to get an even spread and will hopefully mean that the organisers can play a more active role in recruiting and supporting our fabulous volunteers.

We really do appreciate the contribution our volunteers make in our schools and we thought it would be good to profile some of our volunteers from time to time in the newsletter. This enables us to showcase their work and to demonstrate the impact it has in the schools. This time we have included a short interview with **Sandra Enticknap**, a long-standing volunteer, and included some comments from the headmaster in one of the schools she has been helping in.

Sandra's interview

Q - Where do you volunteer at the moment and how long you have been doing it?

A - I am probably a bit unusual in that I volunteer in two schools - Blaise Juniors and Broomhill Juniors. I first started over seven years ago, and I have been going to Broomhill school ever since I started. I liked it so much that I asked if I could help in another school too and that is why I am now helping in both.

Q - Tell us a bit about how you got started all those years ago, and what attracted you to becoming a school volunteer.

A - I saw an notice in the BS6 magazine about RSVP's Reading in Schools project, and I thought that I would really like to give it a go. I have always loved reading myself, and I used to enjoy reading with my children when they were young, and of course, I am still doing it, when I can, with my grandchildren. I feel strongly that learning to read is vital for all children, and I thought I could be of help.

Q - What gives you the most satisfaction?

A - Watching the children come on, and seeing them make progress. I also love it when children I have helped in earlier years still come up to say hello and tell me how they are doing. It is good to have the time to get to know children individually. They all like to read in their own way; some just want to read for pleasure, and some are keen to work their way through the reading scheme as quickly as possible. As a volunteer, I am able to follow their lead. I want them to feel important and I want them to enjoy having a bit of individual, and non - pressured, attention. In my experience all the children want to do well, and it is very gratifying to see them improving and knowing that I have helped in my own gentle way.

The headmaster at Broomhill school, Colin Thompson, obviously has a very high opinion of Sandra's contribution. Here is a little bit of what he had to say:

" Sandra has made such a difference helping hundreds of our struggling readers to find enjoyment and success in their reading. The children have got to know her well and look forward to the time they have with her. I cannot over-exaggerate the impact her regular support has."

It is gratifying when our volunteers are appreciated as fulsomely as Sandra is, but we know that all schools operate in different ways, and many are under a lot of pressure. They may have a different approach to using volunteers, and we know that sometimes it does not always feel so comfortable for our volunteers. Now that we have more organisers in Bristol, we want to be able to keep in closer contact and help with any problems as soon as they emerge. Volunteering is an act of giving, but it has to feel good for us too!

Thank you to all our volunteers! You are all doing a great job and we would love to hear from you from time to time, to keep us up to speed with how you are getting along.

From your Bristol Organisers - Mina, Judy & Sue.