**INTRODUCTION**

The Hanoi High School is a school which has 1500 students, ranging in age from 16 to 19 years. It is situated in Cau Giay district, in Hanoi, but the students come from a wide region. To go to the school, students have to pass an exam. They have to major in Sciences, IT, Maths or English. They have extra lessons each week.

These students are the future teachers and professionals of Vietnam. It is important that they are fluent English speakers.

**VOLUNTEER’S ROLE**

Upon request of teachers, volunteers run the activities in the class. They are asked to help students develop **speaking and listening** skills.

Vietnamese schools traditionally favor ‘passive learning’ – the teacher standing in front and lecturing. This does not help students to gain confidence in speaking. The pronunciation of the English teachers is not good so the children have little opportunity to hear English as it is really spoken. Moreover, some they are very shy to speak out in front of the whole class.

Volunteers can think about games or interactive activities to let all students get involved in the lessons.

**Work as a local teacher or supporting a local teacher**

*Working as a local teacher*

Each class is run by an English-speaking Vietnamese teacher who teaches according to the governmental English books. The volunteers will join one lesson of the teacher to know how they teach, after that the volunteers will prepare activities and games to practice pronunciation and communication skills with the students. The teacher will let the volunteers lead the class the whole time, during 45’. The volunteers can prepare the lessons freely, choosing the topics, activities, discussions or games they prefer. They do not have to follow the governmental book.

*Assisting a local teacher*

Some teachers prefer volunteers support them, so they will teach during the first 35 minutes. During this part of the class the volunteer should support the teacher while doing exercises, correcting the pronunciation, keeping them in silence or assisting the teacher in any activity required. The second part of the class takes place during the last 10 minutes in which. Then the Vietnamese teacher sits at the back of the class and provides assistance when necessary.

If the volunteer does not feel confident he/she can start supporting the teacher, with the possibility to teach alone after some weeks.

**WORKING TIME**

Each class has one Vietnamese English-teacher with 25 to 40 students, depending on the class. Each period lasts for 45 minutes.

The volunteer participates in different classes per day, working from Monday to Friday. The general timeframe at school is from 7:50 to 17:20. The lunch break is between 11:15 and 1:05 o’clock. Depending on volunteers’ schedule, he/she has different beginning and ending time.

Since the school is not so far from the volunteer house, volunteers can come back to the accommodation for lunch.

**LUNCH**

The school is 15 minitues walking from the volunteer’s house, thus, volunteer can come back home to have lunch.

**TRAVEL TO PROJECT**

Volunteers often walk to the project. It takes 15 minutes.

**CONTACT:**

**\*At Hanoi High school for Gifted Students**

The mentor is Mrs. Huong.

The mentor is the person who will be in charge of the volunteer in the placement. Contact her to:

* Inform when you are sick or late, if it is possible one day in advance because they need to know to make the work schedule.
* Information about organizational issues: logistics, timetable, meals, sleeping room after lunch, work material, etc.
* Help related with problems at work. Usually the mentor is the person in the center. As she can speak little English she will be useful and try her best to be a translator between the local staff and the international volunteer.

**Contact of school:**

**Address:** D1 building, 136, Xuan Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi

**Phone:** 04 37 54 76 61

**Mentor:** Huong 091 255 05 06

**\*At VPV**: The coordinator responsible in VPV head office is Mai.

**Address:** No.56, lane 99, Nguyen Phong Sac Street, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam

**Phone:** 0129 222 7515

**Mail :** individual@vpv.vn

**CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The volunteer can ask to observe the teachers’ lessons during the first week. We kindly recommend doing this short training to understand the dynamic of Vietnamese classes and to learn some tricks from the local teachers in big size Vietnamese classes.

Teachers have some specific program to teach and sometimes they do not have enough time to finish it on time, which is the reason why the speaking and pronunciation part of the class is reduced in order to have more time for the book exercises. It is common to use the speaking part of the class to correct pronunciation problems instead of giving the volunteers the opportunity to prepare games by themselves. Be patient and proactive; even if you can not prepare activities every day do not lose motivation to propose new games or activities for the class. Remember that your support to the local teacher is also really important for the development of the children’s English skills.

Prepare games to practice pronunciation and speaking skills related to the English program, it will be easier to apply in the class and the children will understand the vocabulary or grammar better. Use funny games or songs but remember that the English level in very different, so try to prepare activities without complicated instructions or rules and with vocabulary and grammar according to their level. It is useful as well to bring material about your personal life, your country or your hobbies to make them more interested in the class.

Try to be active when you are assisting the English teacher. Some previous volunteers recommended not to stand in front of the class because the children might be embarrassed or they could pay less attention to the teacher. It could be better to walk around the class to help the students with the exercises, correcting them when necessary, helping the teacher to keep them quiet and sit or wait in the back of the class when the teacher is explaining something.

If you want to photocopy material bring it at least one day in advance and show it to the teacher. They will help you with printing it. Be aware that the school has a limited budget so be sensitive to this.

During the journey the volunteer joins different classes. It is possible that he/she will repeat the same lessons several times per day.

The volunteers have a detailed schedule about the classes they should join every day. Although, sometimes there can are changes in the schedule, the teachers will usually try to inform you the previous day.

Moreover, there are many classrooms in the whole school so it could be confusing arriving there. It is useful, instead of going directly to the next class, to go to the staff’s room and wait there. The teachers will help you decide which class is best to join and you can follow them to the classroom.

Working in another country always is challenging because of the cultural and organizational differences. You will probably find even other challenges that we did not describe; you have to/will discover them by yourself. Try to be as positive, patient and creative as possible in order to solve it. Do not doubt to ask your coordinator for any help you need, we are here to support you.

As a volunteer you can be really meaningful in helping the students improving their speaking skills and motivate the teachers to learn a more participative and funny way of teaching. Enjoy your volunteer experience!

**DOS AND DON’TS**

* Dress more conservatively when teaching at the school. It is not considered appropriate showing knees or shoulders.
* Contact your coordinator from VPV if there is any misunderstood between you and the teachers. Or if you need any advice to communicate with the staff and teachers from school effectively and friendly.
* Do not smoke in the school, even in the garden or open-air areas. It is a bad model for the children or adolescents. Neither give nor accept cigarettes from teenager students. If you are a smoker please leave the school area to smoke.
* Do not lose your temper in public. Even if you are frustrated or feel you are being mistreated, to show anger will be seen as a serious loss of face and will rarely help you achieve what you want. It is more effective to smile, show patience and ask again about what you need.
* Do not correct the English teacher in front of other teachers or students. You should avoid hurting the others feelings. During your speaking and pronunciation exercises you will have the chance to correct all the mistakes you feel necessary to correct.

**BASIC TIPS**

* Speak slowly, repeat often
* Write things you are saying on the board if you notice that the children are not understanding you
* Walk through the class during class, explain the task again to single students, make them work and take away Math books, comics, letters...
* Create as many different games related to the topic as possible. The students love games/ activities
* Explain the task from the book in your own, more simple words
* The students are competitive. Divide the class in two or use rows. They love teams.
* Don’t let them use their solution books (or you’ll have exactly the same dialogue and same opinions from all students).
* Don’t let them do what they are not supposed to do with the other teachers. You might want to be their friend but then you’ll lose their respect as a teacher.
* Don’t be surprised about the partly strange English in the school books
* They are intelligent students. Keep varying lessons but do not overdo the games( Hangman can be used to introduce a topic)
* Use the ESL web sites to find materials and word search maker sites to give relevant word searches
* Do not put up with mobile phones, talking over other students
* Do not put up with bad behavior. The school teachers will deal with it if you ask for their help.

**PHOTO GALLERY**

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| Stephanie |

