



HOME VISIT POLICY

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The following guidelines are important for all home visits.

- **All home visits conducted by staff must be authorised by a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the headteacher.**
- **All home visits conducted by senior leaders must be authorised by the headteacher.**

This guidance is to be used for off-site meetings with learners and or parents/carers.

In addition, wherever possible parents/carers should be informed of the home visit prior to arrival, there will be exceptions to this for example a visit to confirm that an absent learner is at home when parents/carers are not responding to attempted contact or emergency safeguarding visits.

Home Visit Definition: A home visit is a visit that requires school staff to enter the home of a parent or carer in the case of an emergency or procedural visit.

1. Aims

The aim of a home visit is:

- To establish a partnership between parents/carers and staff so that all parties share their knowledge about the learner to enable the individual needs of the learner to be met.
- To develop and strengthen relationships with parents/carers for the best interests of the learner.

Reasons for home visits:

Home visits are to be used when:

- Learners are refusing to come into school; this can be carried out by school staff when there are attendance issues/concerns
- When learners are being educated at home
- When all other means of contact with a family has failed
- To meet with parents/carers to discuss an issue regarding a learner where it is in the best interest of the learner to have that discussion in their own home rather than at school or where it would be difficult for parents/carers to attend school for a meeting and information needs to be shared in a face-to-face meeting in a timely manner.
- To try and establish that a learner is safe if they are absent from school and attempts to contact parents/carers have not elicited a response and we have any welfare or safeguarding concerns for the learner.
- To work with and support parents/carers in developing strategies to help the learner attend school where attendance is an issue.
- To drop off or collect work for a learner when they are completing schoolwork at home.
- To visit a learner who has been off school for a period of time, for example due to a medical issue, so that they do not feel isolated from school.
- To investigate situations when there are suspicions that someone may be on holiday contrary to earlier indications (for example when a learner is not at school and reported as being ill, during the same period for which a request for exceptional leave in term-time had been refused).

2. Procedures

The aim of the home visit procedure is to ensure good working practice and to provide guidelines in reducing risks to members of staff when undertaking home visits.

Before the Visit

- Be familiar with the school's procedures for home visits.
- Be clear about the purpose of the visit and that it is absolutely necessary.
- Make a written record of the purpose of the visit and the staff members involved.
- Arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you, home visits should be conducted in pairs. Clarify each person's role. (In some circumstances the school staff may accompany a social worker visit).
- Make sure you are well informed about the subject of the visit. Collect any necessary documentation.
 - Consider who you need to see, e.g. one or both parents/carers, with or without the child.
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances.
- Wherever possible make an appointment to establish a time convenient to the family and to ensure that everyone you want to see will be present. Either make a phone call or send a letter.
- Complete, '**Home Visits Step Analysis of Risk Assessment**', (appendix 1), and hand in to reception to inform them of your intended location before departing for a home visit.

During the Visit

- Park in a well-lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving.
- Dress appropriately.
- Ensure that there are no animals in the room where a meeting takes place.
- Introduce yourself, have identification available and explain again the purpose of the visit, carry your identification - do not use a necklace lanyard.
- Do not enter the premises unless invited in by a responsible adult.
- Do not enter the premises if invited to do so by a child that is on the premises unsupervised by a responsible adult.
- Only speak to parents/carers or another responsible adult whom a parent/carer has delegated to be there in their absence and who has been given permission to speak about the student for whom we are making the home visit.
- Do not speak to siblings other than to ask if their parent/carer is available. Do not discuss the purpose of the visit with siblings or any other unknown young person or adult at the premises.
- Do not go upstairs in a property
- Do not enter a child's bedroom.
- If you are concerned that a child is in the home inappropriately alone, unsupervised or in danger contact a designated safeguarding lead or deputy DSL straight away to discuss your concerns
- If you feel that a child is in immediate danger contact emergency services on 999.
- Assure parents/carers that you will treat anything they tell you sensitively and will only tell the head teacher or other appropriate staff. Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting. Do not promise not to relay information to school. Remember that under the child protection procedures you must report disclosures or suspicions to a designated safeguarding lead.
- Be sensitive to the culture, religion etc. of the home. Be prepared to remove footwear if asked.
- Be professional; give professional advice and information rather than personal opinions.
- Be sympathetic but remain neutral. Do not get personally involved. Be discreet but assertive about the direction of the conversation; do not gossip about the school or staff.
- Do not stay too long. Keep to the point.
- Do not carry large sums of money when making a home visit.

After the visit

- Report back to the school, by recording the visit on CPOMS, in line with the school policy.
- If you are not returning directly to school, telephone the school after the visit to say you have left the home visit.
- Any Child Protection concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with a Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy on arrival back at school.
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with any staff who are not directly involved with those particular children.

Reports

- It is essential that staff record every visit they make on CPOMS.
- If an incident does occur the visitor should record all details as soon as possible after the incident before the precise recollection of events falls from their memory.
- If an accusation of abuse is made against the visitor advice should be sought from the Head Teacher as soon as possible.

Making Safe Home Visits: summary

Before

- Complete/hand in, 'Home Visits Step Analysis of Risk Assessment'
- Be clear about the purpose of the visit.
- Arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you.
- Be well informed about the subject of the visit.
- Always make sure that the school knows where you are going.

During

- Carry a mobile phone with you.
- Consider who you need to see.
- Make a prior appointment to establish the time of the visit.
- Carry identification; do not wear it on a necklace lanyard.
- Do not stay too long.
- Introduce yourself.
- Be professional.
- Don't carry large sums of money.

Action to take if you are threatened

- If you are threatened or prevented from leaving, stay calm and try to control the situation. Try to appear confident, speak slowly and clearly and not be enticed into an argument. Try to diffuse the situation by saying you will seek advice from a senior member of staff or colleague.
- Keep your distance, never touch or turn your back on someone who is angry.
- Wait outside the property until all staff involved have arrived.
- If working as a pair, agree on a code word (safe word) or phrase to alert a colleague that you need assistance or should leave.
- The same code word should be used if you contact the school to alert them that you are in danger and need support.
- Staff must leave the property and reach a place of safety if you have any concerns about personal safety and inform the school immediately.

After

- Report back in school.

or

- If you are not returning directly to school, telephone the school after the visit to say you have left the residence.

If you are concerned about your safety do not visit.

No one should make a visit outside school hours, unless it is deemed an emergency and authorised by the Head Teacher.

A SAFE WORD should be agreed and recorded on the 'Home Visits Step Analysis of Risk Assessment Intent to Visit'.

3. Home Visits Step Analysis of Risk Assessment Intent to Visit

Staff Name and contact number	
Visiting Name and contact number	
Visiting address	
Learner name	
Date	
Accompanied	