

HOME VISIT POLICY

Our school is:

- a safe, **supportive** stimulating learning environment;
- a **team** of respectful, tolerant, open minded citizens;
- a community where everyone **aspires** to be the very best they can be;
- a community of **resilient** lifelong learners;
- a centre of excellence where all achieve **success**.

PURPOSE

This policy is to ensure good working practice and provide guidelines in reducing risks to members of staff when undertaking home visits.

Review Date	August 2023
Reviewed By	R. Darling
Next Review	August 2026
Summary of changes	Creation of policy

Approved By:

Head Teacher **Date**

Chair of Governors **Date**

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1. INTRODUCTION

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.

Arboretum Primary School recognises the importance of establishing a close relationship with families. Home visits are an important part of the transition process into school and a positive way to create a welcoming and supportive learning relationship with families so that all children are able to get the very best from their time at school. This policy is designed to protect the safety of all parties carrying out home visits. Where home visits take place, a risk assessment should be completed in advance. This will identify any concerns about potential risk and appropriate measures to be taken. If specific information is known about families, this should be added to the risk assessment.

The following guidelines are important for all home visits.

- All home visits conducted by staff must be authorised by the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- All home visits conducted by senior leaders must be authorised by the headteacher. This guidance is to be used for off-site meetings with students 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 child is at home when parents/carers are not responding to attempted contact or emergency safeguarding visits.

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

This policy is designed to be used in conjunction with other policies and documents including:

- Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy
- Statement of Procedures for dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff & Volunteers

- Physical Intervention and Positive Handling Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy

2. 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 child to enable the individual needs of the child to be met.
- To develop and strengthen relationships with parents/carers for the best interests of the child.

2.1 Reason for Home Visits

Home visits are important in helping the school to make contact with new or hard to reach parent/carers. They are useful as they enable the parents/carer to have contact with the school, but in their own environment.

Home visits are carried out by parties for a number of reasons:

Attendance and wellbeing visits

- When students are refusing to come into school; this can be carried out by school staff when there are attendance issues/concerns;
- When students 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 their child where it is in the best interest of the child 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 child 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 student;
- To work with and support parents/carers in developing strategies to help their child attend school where attendance is an issue;
- To drop off or collect work for a child when they are completing schoolwork at home;
- To visit a child 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 child 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).

Early Years transition home visits

- To meet the child and their family in their home environment and to establish a warm and caring relationship before the child starts school to ease the settling in period.
- To ensure that the child has met staff on familiar territory. This can help the child feel more confident about making the transition from home to school.

- To encourage families to share appropriate information about their child. This information will help us to get to know the child's needs, answer any questions and to plan an appropriate transition.
- To share information about Arboretum and how we can support families.

3. PROCEDURES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A HOME VISIT

3.1 PRIOR TO HOME VISIT

- Home visits should be completed in pairs where possible, following a telephone call to or from families beforehand to agree the visit.
- Where possible and appropriate, arrange the first visit to an address over the telephone to establish as much information as possible, such as who will be present in the home
- If unable to speak to families and have not had a contact call regarding the child's absence, a home visit will be completed without arrangement.
- Before staff leave to go on a home visit they must inform the school office, and leave the following information recorded in the Home Visits Log (Appendix 3):
 - Date of visit
 - Names of staff conducting the home visit
 - Names of children to be visited
 - Mobile phone numbers of the staff conducting the home visit
 - The time you leave school, and the time you arrive back at school.
- Staff should be aware of any relevant background information before making a visit. This may include who lives at the address, any relevant safeguarding information and any factors that may pose a higher risk to personal safety.
- If this is the first visit to the home, the risk assessment check list must be completed (Appendix 2). If previous visits have been conducted, then a full risk assessment should have been completed and be available for review (Appendix 4)
- A plan should be developed between those staff who are attending - what is going to be discussed, how this is going to be delivered and what you would like to be achieved.
- If using a car, driver/s are to provide the necessary documents to the school office – driving license (both parts may be required, depending on date of issue), MOT certificate and insurance certificate, evidencing that there is the appropriate business insurance cover for the vehicle being used to transport staff to and from the visit.
- Where advice is communicated from any source which suggests caution or a reason not to conduct a home visit, then this advice must be given full consideration.
- Ensure the number of a member of staff based at school who is accessible and available throughout the full duration of the visit, is stored into your telephone and agree a code word to indicate you are in trouble and need help.
- The safety of school staff is very important. Staff should not take risks. If they feel insecure they should not go on a home visit. It is the staff's responsibility to voice their concerns to their line manager.

3.2 DURING THE HOME VISIT

- Identification cards will be worn at all times, clearly displayed on the front and outside of clothing.
- Park in a well-lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving.
- 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.
- A house should not be entered if the member of staff feels unsafe. If a visit is cancelled because of concerns over safety, the reason for cancelling the visit must be discussed with the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.
- If there are potentially dangerous animals in the house, the member of staff will request that they are kept in a separate room. If the parent/carer refuses, or is unable to adhere to this request, the visit will be cancelled. The reason for the cancellation will be communicated to the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.
- 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.
- If staff are asked any questions they cannot answer, they will either find out and report back to the parent/carer or refer the parent or carer to a senior member of staff.
- If the situation starts to become unmanageable (i.e. verbal or physical aggression) staff should call the meeting to an end and leave the property. If you are unable to do this safely without aggravating the situation, call the staff member back at school using the code word to summon help. In this case the buddy should make a 999 call to the police.

3.3 IF NO ONE IS HOME DURING A HOME VISIT

- Leave a note with the date and time you were there, the school phone number and a time that you can be reached to set up a new appointment.
- Return to the school and try to call the parent. If you are unable to locate them at that time, send a note home with the child the next school day, asking the parent to contact you for a time the visit could be rescheduled.
- It is the responsibility of the staff due to visit to ensure that parents are contacted immediately if they are unable to keep to the scheduled appointment. If the home visitor cancels a home visit, due to illness or otherwise, it must be reconvened at a later date.

3.4 IN THE EVENT OF AN INCIDENT

- If there is an incident while at the home address, staff should assess the situation and make a decision on the best course of action to keep themselves safe (see Appendix 1 for tips) Depending on the nature of the incident it may be necessary for staff to contact the member of staff at school to get help or contact the emergency services on 999 or 101.
- On return to the office after an incident, the staff member must contact the Headteacher, inform them of the incident and complete an incident report form, making sure that the incident is factually recorded. All incident report forms must be shared with the Headteacher by the end of the working day.

3.5 AFTER A HOME VISIT

- If not returning directly to school, staff must telephone the school to inform them that they have left the home visit
- If the staff member/s do not return to school within the allotted time, and have not contacted the school to tell them why they are going to be late, then the school must make all reasonable attempts to contact each staff member. If contact cannot be established, a senior leader must be informed immediately and consideration must be given to contacting the police.
- A senior leader will take the following steps, as required, in the event of staff not returning: attempt to contact the family via a landline and speak to visiting staff, drive past the property to check if the vehicle is there, look for signs of an incident, and/or contact the police to report the individuals missing.
- A full risk assessment should also be completed following the first visit, and if necessary updated after each subsequent visit, which will form the basis of any further home visits that are required. The risk assessment must be signed off by a member of the senior leadership team. After every visit, the relevant school paperwork to document the visit should be completed, and any follow up actions undertaken.
- Any concerns relating to the visit should be entered into the pupil's records on CPOMS.

Appendix 1 – Expected Staff Behaviour

Staff behaviour:

- Remain professional at all times
- Be a good listener
- Have specific goals or objectives for each visit
- Realise the limitations of your role
- Help parents become more independent
- Keep language appropriate
- Remember that small improvements lead to big ones
- Respect cultural and ethnic values
- Monitor your own behaviour; the parent is observing you

Personal safety during a home visit

- Keep your car keys and mobile phone in a pocket or on your person; in case of an emergency, you need to be able to exit and/or call for help quickly
- Survey the premises for exits and ways out in an emergency
- If the person you are visiting locks the front door, ask them to leave the key in the lock
- Be wary of trip hazards that are both external and internal, such as steps, lifted floor coverings, electrical wires
- If there are dogs or other pets which concern you, ask that they be put away in a locked kennel or room
- Do not wear expensive jewellery
- Limit the amount of cash you carry
- Dress appropriately for the purpose of your visit

Travel safety tips when conducting a home visit

- Lock your car doors as soon as you enter your car
- If parking in a private driveway, reverse park if you are able to do so, so that you can simply drive out
- In a cul-de-sac, park in the direction of the cul-de-sac exit
- Approach your car with your keys easily available or in your hand
- Check the car interior before entering
- Hide any bags or personal/work items so that they are not viewable
- Avoid parking beside vans/trucks
- Park in well-lit areas and avoid parking in isolated areas

Tips to consider if you are faced with aggression during a home visit

- Never enter a house if there are raised voices or signs of aggression coming from within – call the police
- Don't enter a home with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Don't enter a home with someone who is inappropriately dressed
- If an aggressive incident occurs, remember to remain as calm as possible, and speak slowly and calmly
- Stay in communal and neutral rooms such as a living room; avoid moving into bedrooms or kitchens
- Keep space between yourself and the aggressor, and try to keep a barrier (e.g. table) between you where possible
- Slowly move towards an exit, or to a room you can barricade yourself in
- Try not to walk backwards as you risk tripping over
- At the earliest opportunity call the Police, and call your school to report the incident

Appendix 2 – Initial Risk Assessment

Initial Home Visit Risk Assessment:

Family Name:	Address:	Contact Details:	
Date Completed:	By Whom:		
	Yes	No	
Is anyone in the household known for violent offences?			
Is anyone in the household known to misuse drugs or alcohol?			
Have any risks been identified by any other agencies?			
Are there any pets in the household?			
i) Are they threatening?			
Are you aware of any intimidating/threatening clients, relatives or friends living at or likely to visit the property?			
Are there any dangers/hazards associated with the property?			
Do you think contact should be made outside of the home?			
Are you confident all safety measures are in place?			
Areas of concern – if you have answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide further details			
Level of risk – without control measures in place High / Medium / Low			
Control measures in place to reduce risk			
Level of risk – without control measures in place High / Medium / Low			
Date	Senior Leader – PRINT	Senior Leader – SIGN	

