

# Home Visits Policy



**Approved by:** Governing Body

**Last reviewed on:** September 2024

**Next review due by:** September 2025

## **Introduction**

The school is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all staff and volunteers for which there is a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and further detailed within the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

This guidance applies to work carried out during home visits.

The decision of whether a member of staff can carry out a home visit will depend on the findings of the risk assessments; these must be reviewed and adapted for each home visit as appropriate. The level of detail required for each risk assessment should be proportionate to the risks identified. Decisions regarding if a visit should be conducted jointly or singularly by staff will be considered on the merits of the risk assessment in place.

## **Aim**

This policy is to support any practitioner supporting children and families to help develop an effective home visiting policy and practice. The school has a legal responsibility to provide safe systems of working when conducting home visits alone, individual staff must also take responsibility to follow safe working practices when working in the community. This policy will ensure that a standardised, practical, and knowledge-based approach for home visiting is taken by senior managers, in line with current legislation and best practice.

A home visit is a visit that requires member(s) of staff to enter the home of a parent, carer, or guardian in the case of an emergency visit or a procedural visit.

**ALL HOME VISITS CONDUCTED BY STAFF MUST BE AUTHORISED BY THE SAFEGUARDING LEAD (OR MEMBER OF THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM) PRIOR TO THE VISIT TAKING PLACE.**

In addition, wherever possible parents/carers/guardians 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 there is no response to telephone calls/text messages or emergency safeguarding visits.

There are a number of aims and reasons a home visit may be carried out including, but not limited to:

- 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 for the best interests of the child.
- Helping the school to contact new or hard to reach parents/carers.
- Can be useful as they enable the parents/carers to still have contact with the school, but in their own environment.
- When pupils are refusing to come into school.
- 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 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 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 have not elicited a response and we have any welfare or safeguarding concerns for the student.
- To work with and support developing strategies to help their child attend school where attendance is an issue.
- To collect from or drop a child off at home where there are concerns for a child's welfare if they travelled by other means.
- To drop off or collect work for a child when they are completing schoolwork at home e.g. following a fixed term suspension or medical issue.
- 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.)
- As part of a multiagency visit.

### **Benefits of home visits**

Home visits have many benefits. A home visit gives the opportunity to meet a key person in a setting that they are familiar and comfortable with. Other opportunities are to:

- Establish a positive contact with a key member of staff who is supporting the child.
- Meet family members that are important to the child.
- Talk about the child and their needs.

### **Procedures**

The aim of the home visit policy 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 policy and procedure for home visits.
- Be clear about the purpose of the visit. Make sure that a home visit is really necessary. (If possible and/or practical, arrange for parents/carers to come into the school)
- Discuss with the Safeguarding Lead whether it is deemed appropriate for the visit to be made alone or whether an additional person is required to protect professional integrity and ensure staff safety.
- If required, arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you; home visits should ordinarily be conducted in pairs unless a risk assessment determines otherwise.
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances.
- Consider who you need to see and if this will be with or without the child present.
- 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 an email.

- Refer to the 'Risk Assessment' (appendix 1) and inform a member of the DSL team 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 an adult with parental responsibility or another responsible adult if they have permission to speak about the child 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 unless accompanied by a responsible adult and then ONLY if you deem it completely safe to do so and necessary.
- Do not enter a child's/young person's bedroom.
- If you are concerned that a child/young person is in the home inappropriately alone/unsupervised contact the schools safeguarding team straight away to discuss your observations or to seek immediate advice from them if you are uncertain whether the child is alone/unsupervised. If appropriate the Safeguarding Lead will make a referral to social care.
- If you feel that a child/young person is in immediate danger contact emergency services using 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. Remember that under the child protection procedures you must report disclosures or suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Be sensitive to the culture, religion etc of the home.
- Be professional; give professional advice and information rather than personal opinions.
- Be sympathetic but remain neutral. Don't 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:

- Complete a file note to evidence visit. It is essential that staff write a short report on every visit they make.
- If an incident does occur the visitor should record all details as soon as possible after the incident, before precise recollection of events falls from their memory.
- If an accusation of abuse is made against the visit/visitor advice should be sought from the head teacher as soon as possible.
- Report back to the school and hand in the completed file note to the Safeguarding office in line with 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 the Safeguarding team on arrival back to school.
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved with those particular children.

## **Responsibilities**

Ensuring that lone working risk assessments are carried out and all control measures are implemented is a managerial responsibility. All relevant members of staff should be made aware of the risk assessment and in consultation with their line managers it should be reviewed and considered prior to any visit being conducted. Members of staff have a duty to co-operate with this directive and comply with all controls in place to ensure safe working.

## **Policy Implementation:**

- The Head Teacher will be responsible for the implementation, review, and evaluation of the Home Visitor Policy.
- The policy will form part of the staff induction.
- The Head Teacher will ensure that all persons conducting home visits understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary precautions are carried out.
- The Head Teacher will give guidance in situations of uncertainty and will report on a regular basis any incidents that have taken place in line with the reporting procedures for critical incidents.
- All staff working with this policy should take ownership of this process in order to develop their own awareness of the policy and related procedures enhancing their professional development and establishing their responsibility to ensure it is implemented effectively.

## **Links to other policies**

- Safeguarding
- Attendance

<b>RISK ASSESSMENT FOR:</b>  <b>Cornfields School</b>	<b>Home Visits</b> Working offsite / conducting home visit	
	<b>Assessment by:</b> Andy Mack, Operations Manager	<b>Date:</b> September 2023

Hazard / Risk	Who is at Risk?	How can the hazards cause harm?	Normal Control Measures	Are Normal Control Measures Y/N/NA	
				In Place	Adequate
<b>Home Visits</b> Working offsite alone Home visits etc.	Staff Colleagues	Accident / injury, delayed assistance in emergency  Physical assault / verbal abuse  Cuts / abrasions, muscular skeletal and other physical injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Refer to home visit policy.</li> <li>- Risk reduced by informing safeguarding team prior to visit.</li> <li>- Inform DSL and reception and sign out so others aware.</li> <li>- For home visits background information on the family is gathered beforehand, a specific risk assessment conducted where necessary.</li> <li>- Where higher risk identified visits not to be conducted alone</li> <li>- Reduce time spent working alone so far as is reasonably practicable.</li> <li>- All staff to be familiar with lone working procedures. Mobile phone available, charged and switched on.</li> <li>- Agreed schedule –times and location of visits to be known. Response procedure in event of overdue contact.</li> <li>- Contact point available in office Staff own experience and training in recognising signs of aggression and avoiding / de-escalating this.</li> <li>- Regular supervision and arrangements for debrief / feedback from staff.</li> </ul>	Y	Y
Driving to home	Staff		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain vehicle properly Belong to a breakdown organisation.</li> </ul>		

<p>Attack by dog or other animal</p>	<p>Colleagues  Staff Colleagues</p>	<p>Vehicle breakdown Accident Intruder in vehicle when unattended Use of mobile phone Fatigue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carry torch, phone etc for emergency</li> <li>- Advise team or partner where you are going</li> <li>- Phone in if plan changes</li> <li>- Do not leave valuables in car (e.g. laptop)</li> <li>- Avoid risky areas</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid contact with animals</li> <li>- Seek local advice before entering premises with animals.</li> <li>- Appropriate behaviour near animals – avoid alarming them, e.g. sudden movements</li> </ul>		
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