

## HOME VISITS POLICY



‘Where Happiness Promotes Success’

## OUR SCHOOL VISION

To ensure every child leaves our school with an outstanding education and the values and character to live life in its fullness, contributing positively to society.

Jesus said: I have come in order that you might have life-and life in all its fullness. John 10:10

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## **Introduction**

This policy is designed to protect the safety of all school staff carrying out home visits. Where home visits take place, a risk assessment should be completed in advance. This will identify any concerns about potential risks and appropriate measures to be taken. If specific information is known about families, this should be added to the risk assessment. EYFS home visits will always take place with staff in pairs. Home visits can only take place when the policy and protocols are fully met. Policy and procedures must be consistently applied.

## **Rationale for carrying out home visits**

There is a unanimous feeling in our school that the home visits which staff undertake have huge benefits. The insights that staff have gained into each child's home and background greatly helps them to assess their level of need in school and prepare for the child's entry into the setting. Another major benefit is that the home visits are the start or the continued building of the relationship with parents which is vital if we are to be successful in providing for the needs of the child. It also shows parents that the school respects them and wants to share their knowledge, which puts the relationship on a more equal footing.

Meeting each child in his or her home environment has proved invaluable in:

- gathering information that will enable the children to settle into Reception class;
- establishing positive links with families, especially those of vulnerable pupils.

For parents and children, a visit gives them the opportunity to meet the teacher and staff in a safe environment, where they feel confident and at ease.

For teachers and support staff, a visit provides the opportunity to:

- establish early, positive contact;
- see children in their own familiar settings;
- meet other family members, people and pets who are important to the children;
- understand the problems that children might encounter at school, and also to appreciate the wealth of learning that goes on in the home.

This all helps to get a fuller picture of the children. Professionals can gain much from observing a child where he or she feels settled and in control.

## **Guidelines for Staff**

### **Structure of EYFS home visits**

The class teacher and a Teaching Assistant make each visit together. As well as the obvious safety implications, this allows one to talk to the child's parents and the other to focus on the child. This can be the beginning of the relationship between the teacher and the child, especially as staff have been invited into the child's home. It also means that the parent has focused time with the Teacher or Teaching Assistant. Twenty minutes is the standard period of time devoted to each home visit. Visits take place at the beginning of the autumn term. Parents are always telephoned in advance to confirm the appointment.

### **Equipment needed**

All visits need careful structuring and prepared resources. Visiting staff members will take an information pack with them when visiting a pupil and their parents in their home. Parents are given these at the welcome meeting in July prior to their child starting school. The pack is at hand should the parent wish to clarify any information. Staff should also take a mobile phone for safety reasons, a map to locate addresses and an activity sheet.

#### **Before the visit.**

- Make appointments in advance and offer alternative dates/times.
- Ensure that parents know when you will arrive, how long you will stay, what will happen, what kinds of questions you will be asking and what information you will bring.
- Ask them to think about the information they need from you in advance of the meeting.
- Accept the right of a family not to want a home visit.
- Confirm Parents/Carers actual name and title and keep on record. Do not presume that there are two parents with the same surname as the child.
- Do not assume that all Parents/Carers are literate.
- Make sure you consider diversity of social, cultural, racial, religious and sexual orientation.
- Familiarise yourself with the route/ location, parking restrictions etc before you leave
- Leave details of your visiting schedule with another member of staff

#### **During the visit**

- Be aware of pets and other adults who may be in the home.
- Sit near a door or exit and if you feel uneasy or worried at any time, make an excuse and leave.
- Staff should avoid commenting on a child's home or provision so that parents do not feel that any judgement is being made on their home or lifestyle.
- Staff should demonstrate an awareness and respect for differing cultures.
- They should comply with appropriate customs such as removing shoes, wearing modest clothing etc.
- Staff should remain aware of time constraints on both themselves and parents.
- Return to the school or phone in when you have completed visits and are back at home.

### **Specific Protocols for All Home Visits**

#### **Risk Assessment:**

- Check records to see what is known and information available.
- Talk to other professionals who may already have had contact or involvement with the family.
- Obtain information about the location of the home visit. For example, does the area have a reputation for being unsafe, isolated or poorly lit?
- Discuss strategies to adopt when working with a potentially challenging Parent/Carer/Family with your line manager.
- Where potential risks are identified, arrange an alternative meeting environment

**Health and Safety:**

- Inform a nominated member of staff when you are leaving for a home visit.
- Leave the details of the home visit schedule with a senior member of staff. Include a list of visit addresses and times including family name, child's name, address, telephone number, purpose of visit, and time due back at base.
- You must inform the nominated person if there is a cancellation or alteration to the time.
- Carry with you and show the parent some form of identification.
- Demonstrate normal courtesy – wait to be invited into the home.
- If a child answers the door, ask if an adult is present in the house before entering. Do not enter if an adult is not present.
- If the Parent/Carer appears at all uncomfortable about the visit continuing, staff should offer to leave, offer to continue the contact with a telephone call and give the Parent/Carer the telephone number of the school.
- Use common sense, trust your instincts and if a situation feels dangerous or threatening – leave, saying for example that you need to get something from your car.
- All Home Visits must finish by 16.30.
- Contact the nominated person immediately after the visit is finished informing them that you are safe. The nominated person must advise the Head Teacher if staff carrying out a home visit has not made contact by the appointed time and locally agreed actions must be followed.

**MONITORING AND REVIEW**

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system. This policy will be reviewed before the start of each academic year and will evolve to incorporate the views of all staff concerned.