



Introduction

This policy outlines the guidance for staff to follow when planning, organising and undertaking home visits. Prior to home visits taking place a risk assessment should be undertaken in line with the school's health and safety / risk assessment policy.

Rationale

Home visits play an important part of building positive relationships between families and school. They allow key staff to gather information about a child's home background. This information can then inform the way staff can prepare in advance to meet a child's individual needs prior to starting school. Meeting each child in their home environment helps to build trust and to initiate strong communication between home and school. It provides parents/carers with an opportunity to talk about any concerns they may have in a comfortable environment and shows that parents'/carers' contributions to their child's education is fully valued.

A home visit provides:

- Information for the practitioner to support the settling process for each child by establishing a positive relationship with parents/carers and the child.
- The opportunity to observe a child in their familiar surroundings.
- A context to build an open line of communication with parents.
- An insight into the child, their personal circumstances and experiences that they have encountered.
- Opportunity to gain information about any medical needs, allergies or likes and dislikes the child has.
- Parents/carers with the chance to talk openly in the comfort of their own home.
- The opportunity to meet any other family members that are important to the child (including pets).
- Practitioners with valuable information about any potential barriers to learning and appreciate the learning currently happening at home.

Guidance for a home visit

Before the Visit

All children starting Nursery/Reception will be offered a home visit. Parents/carers will be contacted in writing to explain the purpose of this with a proposed date. Parents/carers will confirm this date or arrange an alternative with the school office. A telephone call will be made to parents/carers by the setting/school on the day prior to the booked visit to confirm attendance. Communication with parents/carers should:

- Inform them when you will arrive, how long you will stay and what they can expect to happen.
- Remind them that they may wish to write some questions down to ask when you arrive.
- Discuss how you will maintain social distancing if this is required (corona virus) through meeting outside or on the doorstep.



Staff will make sure that they will have:

- A schedule with full address and contact details (full parents/carers names) for all visits. A copy of this should be left with the school office.
- Considered travel and parking availability.
- Prepared any paperwork or items/toys that will be taken on the visit in advance.
- Provided the office with a planned route and time schedule for their visits.

During the visit

- Always undertake home visits in pairs, ideally teacher and class practitioner. Make sure at least one person has a mobile phone on them.
- Dress appropriately and consider the family's cultural diversity (for example, removing shoes before entering).
- Show respect for parents as partners in their child's learning.
- Be aware of who else is in the property including pets.
- One practitioner should play with the child whilst the other talks to the parent/carer about the information on the home visit form.
- Do not make any judgemental comments regarding the child's home or living situation.
- Do not be left alone with the child and if at any point you feel your safety is at risk, leave and report this immediately through the appropriate channels. Be respectful. If a parent/carer asks you to leave their home, do so immediately.

After the visit

Return to school or telephone to let them know your schedule of visits has been completed. Any documentation carried with you or collated during the visits must be stored securely in line with the schools GDPR requirements (Data Protection Policy).

Health and Safety

A full risk assessment should be undertaken prior to attending home visits in line with the school's health and safety policy.

The following protocol should be followed:

- At least one nominated member of staff in school should be aware of the home visits schedule and practitioners should check in regularly.
- The nominated member of staff in school should be informed of any changes to the schedule or cancellations.
- Home visits should take place during normal school working hours.
- Carry your identification and show this before entering.
- Always demonstrate respect, politeness and courtesy in the child's home.



- If the parent/carer appears not to be present or a child appears alone, do not enter the property but inform the safeguarding lead in school immediately via telephone.
- Ensure that you see the child on a home visit or alternative visit. If you are not been able to see the child prior to starting in any context discuss this with your Designated Safeguarding Lead Person.
- If a parent/carer seems uncomfortable offer to leave and reschedule the meeting to happen in school or by telephone.
- Trust your instincts if you feel uncomfortable or threatened at any point politely make an excuse to leave.
- Should the staff visiting not contact the nominated person in school for any reason then the Head Teacher should be notified to check on staff safety.
- If there are concerns on a home visit of a safeguarding concern regarding a child follow school/setting safeguarding procedures.