

# Bledlow Ridge School



## Home Visit Policy

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Approved by	HT and Governing Body
Version number	1

**Home Visit Definition:**

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.

**Aims and Objectives**

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 (see appendix 1). 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. All home visits will always take place with staff in pairs.

Policy and procedures must be consistently applied by all staff.

**Reasons for home visits:**

Home visits are important in helping the school to make contact with new or hard to reach children. They are particularly useful as they enable the child to still have contact with the school, but in their own environment. Home visits are to be used when:

- Students 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 with parents or 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 a parent or carer 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 parent or carer have not elicited a response and we have any welfare or safeguarding concerns for the student.
- To work with and support parents or carers in 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 school work 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).
- To support with transition - particularly for new children joining Bledlow Ridge School Reception class

**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 parent to come into the school)
- Discuss with the Safeguarding Lead who would be the best staff to make the visit.
- Arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you; home visits must be conducted in pairs. Clarify each person's role.
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances.
- Consider who you need to see, e.g. one or both parents or carers, with or without the child.

- 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.
- Refer to the 'Risk Assessment' (appendix 1), and inform another member of staff at school your intended location before departing for a home visit.
- A record of the visit to be recorded electronically on CURA and communicated to office staff, including:
  - date, time of visit and how long it is intended to last for
  - where the visit is taking place (address, name of family etc)
  - which staff are attending

### **During the Visit**

- Always visit in pairs and use the code word 'Bledlow' if there is a threat
- Park in a well lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving. Visits will not take place in the dark.
- Dress appropriately.
- Introduce yourself, have identification available and explain again the purpose of the visit, carry your identification.
- 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 whom a parent or carer has delegated to be there in their absence and they have given us permission to speak to them about the child for whom we are making the home visit.
- 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 is in immediate danger contact emergency services 999.
- 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 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.
- Do not carry large sums of money when making a home visit.
- Sit yourself near the exit and survey the premises for exits and ways out in an emergency
- Do not accept food or drink during the visit. Decline politely.

### **After the visit**

- Report back to the school and update records on CURA
- 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 and recorded on CURA for pupils currently on roll.
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved with those particular children.
- If an incident does occur the visitor should record all details as soon as possible after the incident.

- If an accusation of abuse is made against the visit/visitor advice should be sought from the head teacher as soon as possible.

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

There is a 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 Nursery and Reception classes;
- 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.

### **Strategies/Guidelines for Staff carrying out home visits:**

#### **The structure of EYFS home visits**

The class teacher and teaching assistant should 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. Fifteen minutes is the standard period of time devoted to each home visit. Visits take place either during the term before children are due to start attending Reception or at the beginning of their start term. If a visit is considered high risk then a home visit should not take place. A more safe and secure area at the school should be used for the appointment.

### **If you are concerned about the child's safety or wellbeing and it is not appropriate to discuss this with the family because:**

- You don't feel safe
- You are concerned about child sexual abuse
- You are concerned about domestic abuse and the perpetrator was present
- You feel that raising concerns could compromise the child's safety and wellbeing **YOU MUST SEEK ADVICE URGENTLY, AFTER LEAVING THE FAMILY HOME** You must discuss the situation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) from your setting or First Response 01296 383962 Out of hours
- 0800 999 7677.



## Appendix 1

**HOME VISIT RISK ASSESSMENT** Task being undertaken:

**Date of assessment:**

**Name of person completing the RA:**

Hazards	People	Severity of harm	Likelihood	Risk Level	Controls
Aggressive or violent parent/student/family member	Member of staff may be harmed	Major injury may occur	Remote possibility	low	Refer to home visit policy Risk reduced by informing safeguarding team prior to visit 2 person visit Inform reception and sign out so others aware Take mobile phone for communication <b>Other information:</b>
Driving	Member of staff may be harmed	Vehicle breakdown Accident Intruder in vehicle when unattended Use of mobile phone Fatigue	Remote possibility	Low	Maintain vehicle properly Belong to a breakdown organisation Carry torch, phone etc for emergency Advise team or partner where you are going Phone in if plan changes Do not leave valuables in car (e.g. laptop) Avoid risky areas <b>Other information:</b>

Movement through public areas e.g. to/from car parks	Member of staff may be harmed	Attack Theft of property	remote	Low	Back down from confrontation Call for help Keep valuables secure and out of sight or disguised Surrender valuables if personal safety is at risk Use staff bus or public transport if available Post incident support <b>Other information:</b>
Illness or injury/ accident	Member of staff may be harmed or injured	Illness or injury Take mobile communications	Remote	Low	Alert Emergency services if appropriate Alert team members if able to Ensure access to phone Take prescribed medication as directed or as needed Complete injury at work protocol on return <b>Other information:</b>
Attack by dog or other animal	Member of staff may be harmed or injured	Major injury may occur	Remote	Low	Avoid contact with animals If needed, seek local advice before entering premises with animals Appropriate behaviour near animals – avoid alarming them, e.g. sudden movements <b>Other information:</b>

I have read and understand this Risk Assessment.

My mobile telephone number is:

My safe word is:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date and time: \_\_\_\_\_