



 **Home Visit Policy**

‘Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day’

Reviewed By	Sally Dutson	Policy Owner	17 th September 2017
Approved by	Cate Gregory	Head of School	20 th September 2017
Ratified by	Peter Gould	Governor	2 nd October 2017
NEXT REVIEW			September 2020

AIMS

Home visits are an integral part of our induction process. We believe in the importance of making links with children’s parents and families. Parents are their children’s first and most enduring educators, and therefore if we work with them the results are hugely beneficial to children’s development and learning. We believe that having strong links with our parents enables us to share knowledge and understanding of our children, both from the parents’ point of view and from the teacher’s.

We work hard to develop strong relationships with our parents and this has long-term benefits of developing positive, sustainable partnerships. If these home school links are made at the very initial meeting then it is possible to create a growing appreciation of education and of how their children learn. This then encourages parents to keep in touch with their children’s learning as they move through the school.

THE BENEFITS OF HOME VISITS

For parents with no prior link to the school, entering school premises and meeting teachers can be a daunting prospect, particularly if their own experiences of education were less than positive. We believe that parents may feel more secure and in control in their own homes, and therefore able to talk more freely. In familiar surroundings, they may also find it easier to remember important facts about their children’s medical history, their likes and dislikes and their routines.

From our experience we have found that children can find a new school frightening. A home visit enables a first meeting between child and teacher in an environment that is safe, and where the child feels in control. By visiting the children’s home before they start school, the staff can mention a particular aspect of the visit to build relationships once the child starts school. Recognising a friendly adult face as soon as they enter the classroom can also help children to settle more quickly.

Home visits provide an opportunity for one-to-one interaction with the family. The visit enables an exchange of information between parents, school staff and children, and may also provide a starting point for practitioners to understand family background, including the cultural background. For children, a visit carried out by ‘their’ teacher shows that they are important, and means that some faces will be familiar when they start school. For parents, a home visit provides an opportunity to talk about their child and the school, to voice concerns, to clear up

misunderstandings, and to lessen worries and fears. For parents and children, a visit gives them the opportunity to meet the teacher/s in a safe environment, where they feel confident and at ease.

For teachers and Early Years Assistants, 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.

POTENTIAL ISSUES WITH HOME VISITS

It is important to remember that there are many reasons why a home visit may not be practical. Parents may view teachers visiting their homes as an intrusion of their privacy, or may feel that staff are visiting to assess their parenting. Parents may not be available because of working patterns or care responsibilities, or they may not feel safe about welcoming strangers into their homes.

For staff, home visits may involve unacceptably long journeys, particularly if the catchment area of the school is very wide. The induction arrangements need to support the staff to ensure they can visit all the children in their class and therefore, the school budget may need to be reviewed to allow for supply cover for teachers and support staff to take time out of school to carry out visits which may be costly. We may feel that employing supply staff is too disruptive for existing pupils. It is important to remember that staff may feel concerned about their safety and that of other practitioners they work with, therefore, we ensure every member is happy and confident to participate in a home visit.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

The Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974 requires employers to have safe systems of work, and to provide information and training to employees. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, an obligation is placed on employers to carry out an assessment of the risks to the health and safety of staff at work; this includes both on-site and off-site activities. A risk assessment would be carried out each year in line with where the visits are and using any relevant information fed up from the pre-schools. This assessment is reviewed periodically to ensure the procedures in place are working and to take account of new or changed situations.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

We ensure that all potential risks are considered regarding the home visits and have clear procedures for staff to follow.

Staff will be briefed about the area they are visiting and given any relevant information, which has been fed to the school from Pre-schools or other agencies.

Staff will leave with the school details of:

- Their mobile phone number (if they do not have one, then one will be loaned to them)
- The registration number of their car (if they are driving)
- The name, address and telephone number of the child's home and expected length of their visit

Staff will always tell the school office who they are visiting, the address and time of visit. An expected arrival time of when they will return to school. If there is a change of plan after leaving the school premises or the child's home, the school should be informed.

Staff should report to the Early Years Leader via text after each visit so the progress of visits can be monitored.

If staff are visiting a location which may pose a risk to their personal safety, they should arrange either to telephone the school after the visit to confirm their safe exit, or they should arrange for someone to telephone them during the visit to check their well-being.

Each completed visit should be reported. If a member of staff fails to return to work at the designated estimated time, then the emergency procedure would be taken. See additional plan.

All incidents occurring during home visits should be recorded in writing as soon as possible, while events are still fresh in people's memories.

If staff feel uncomfortable in the child's home, they should leave immediately.

Staff should not enter the house if the person they wish to see is not there. A letter would be given/left to highlight they had missed their home visit.

Staff should always follow the person into the house or room, and remain aware of where the exit is. Staff will remain professional at all times, if a difficult situation arises, excuse yourself and leave. Staff should remember when they are leaving a potential aggressor, they should not turn their backs and leave moving slowly and carefully backwards.

Staff should avoid carrying any bag or wearing any clothing or footwear, which could provoke an attack or impede an effective retreat. Female staff should consider the inadvisability of carrying handbags and suitability of wearing high heels.

Staff should have the school's number saved into their mobile phones in case of an emergency.

If the threat of violence is imminent, wherever possible avoid potential dangerous locations such as tops of the stairs, restricted places or where there are items which could be used as weapons.

WHAT YOU MIGHT DO ON A HOME VISIT

Staff would always visit in pairs, so that one person can talk to the parent while the other plays with the child. This means that the parent can talk without worrying about their child. It also gives you the opportunity to observe the child at play in a familiar environment.

By playing with the child, and by talking to the parents, you can find out what the child can do, and his/her interests, fears, strengths, and weaknesses. Make sure that parents understand that this is not a test.

Take information from school to discuss with parents, for example individual child information sheet or CD Rom in case they could not pick theirs up at the Class Activity sessions.

Staff should always thank the parents and child for their visit and remind them that they can call the school if they have any worries or concerns before the first day of school.

We believe that home visits have such a powerful impact on the supporting children and parents settle into school and have create an immediate discussion point for the teacher and child to talk about and build strong foundations for their relationships. Home visits also support the child as they move though the school as their next teachers can discuss with their reception teacher any issues that may arise in the future and possibly link back to something that happened in the home.

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life to fulfil their potential.

A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DCSF,2008

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