



# Home Visits Policy

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At REAch2, our actions and our intentions as school leaders are guided by our Touchstones:

- Integrity** We recognise that we lead by example and if we want children to grow up to behave appropriately and with integrity then we must model this behaviour.
- Responsibility** We act judiciously with sensitivity and care. We don't make excuses, but mindfully answer for actions and continually seek to make improvements.
- Inclusion** We acknowledge and celebrate that all people are different and can play a role in the REAch2 family whatever their background or learning style.
- Enjoyment** Providing learning that is relevant, motivating and engaging releases a child's curiosity and fun, so that a task can be tackled and their goals achieved.
- Inspiration** Inspiration breathes life into our schools. Introducing children to influential experiences of people and place, motivates them to live their lives to the full.
- Learning** Children and adults will flourish in their learning and through learning discover a future that is worth pursuing.
- Leadership** REAch2 aspires for high quality leadership by seeking out talent, developing potential and spotting the possible in people as well as the actual.

## **1. Audience**

This policy is to be read and implemented by all staff and governors of Martlesham Primary Academy.

## **2. Aims**

To set out guidance to staff making official visits to the homes of referred and registered pupils.

To ensure the personal safety of staff on home visits.

## **3. Procedures**

Reasons why the school might conduct a home visit (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Transitional visit
- Attendance visit
- Welfare concerns
- Professional meeting

If the purpose of the visit is to collect a child/ren to attend school, then it is important that the driver has provided the school with the necessary document (listed below). There must always be two members of staff present when collecting a child and the child/ren must sit in the back of the vehicle. Staff must ensure that they have the appropriate equipment needed to transport child safely i.e. a car seat appropriate to the child's height and age. N.B. legal requirements state that children must use a car seat until they are 12yrs old or 135cm tall, whichever comes first.

### Prior to the Home Visit

Appropriate information should be gathered by the school (name of parents/carers, address, contact details, name of any other adults residing in the home).

If this is the first visit to the home, the risk assessment check list must be completed (Appendix 2). If previous visits have been conducted, then a full risk assessment should have been completed.

Where possible, agree a date / time / agenda with the person/s that you are intending to meet.

Staff are able to request that animals are not present during the home visit.

Develop a plan between those staff who are attending, what is going to be discussed, how this is going to be delivered and what you would like to be achieved.

Driver to provide the necessary documents to the school office. Driving licence and insurance certificate evidencing they have the appropriate business cover.

Where advice is communicated from any source which suggests caution or a reason not to conduct a home visit, then this advice must be given full consideration. All initial home visits should be conducted by at least two members of staff.

Ensure the number of a “buddy”, a member of staff based at school who is accessible and available throughout the full duration of the visit, is stored into your telephone and agree a code word to indicate you are in trouble and need help i.e. “Can you tell Mr Jones I will be late for his appointment today”.

Before staff leave to go on a home visit they must inform the school office, leave the following information recorded in the Home Visits Log (Appendix 3):

- Date of visit / time leaving school;
- Car registration number;
- Mobile phone numbers of the staff conducting the home visit;
- The address of home visit and whom you are expecting to see;
- The time you are expected to arrive and leave the property.

The safety of school staff is very important. Staff should not take risks. If they feel insecure they should not go on a home visit, it is the staff member's responsibility to voice their concerns to their line manager.

### During the Home Visit

Two members of staff will attend every initial home visit, and two members of staff must attend any home visit deemed to pose any risk.

Staff must wear named photo ID.

Remember you are a guest in someone's home. Show respect and courtesy at all times.

If staff are asked any questions they cannot answer, they will either find out and report back to the parent/carer or refer the parent or carer to a senior member of staff.

If the situation starts to become unmanageable (aggressive – verbal or physical) staff should call the meeting to an end and leave the property. If you are unable to do this safely without aggravating the situation call your buddy using the code word to summon help. In this case the buddy should make a 999 call to the police.

Consider personal safety at all times during the visit; do not put yourself in danger (see appendix 1 personal safety tips)

If you arrive for a home visit and no one is home:

- Leave a note with the date and time you were there, the school phone number and a time that you can be reached to set up a new appointment.
- Return to the school and try to call the parent. If you are unable to locate the parent/carer at that time, send a note home with the child the next school day, asking the parent to contact you for a time the visit could be rescheduled.
- It is the responsibility of the staff due to visit to ensure that parents/carers are contacted immediately if unable to keep the scheduled appointment. If the home visitor cancels a home visit (due to illness or otherwise) it must be reconvened at a later date.

### After the Home Visit

You must telephone your buddy when leaving each home visit so that the school knows where you are.

If the staff members do not return to school within the allotted time, and have not contacted the school to tell them why they are going to late then the allocated buddy must make all reasonable attempts to contact each staff member. If contact cannot be established, a senior leader must be informed immediately and consideration must be given to contacting the police.

A senior leader may take the following steps in the event of staff not returning – attempt to contact the family via a landline and speak to visiting staff, drive past property to check if car is there and look for signs of aggression and or contact the police to report the individuals missing.

A full risk assessment should also be completed following the first visit, and if necessary updated after each subsequent visit, which will form the basis of any further home visits that are required. The risk assessment must be signed off by a member of the senior leadership team. After every visit, the relevant school paperwork to document the visit should be completed, and any follow up actions undertaken.

#### **4. In the event of an incident**

If there is an incident while at the home address staff should assess the situation and make a decision on the best course of action to keep themselves safe (see appendix 1 for tips). Depending on the nature of the incident it may be necessary for staff to contact their buddy to get help or contact the emergency services on 999 or 101.

On return to the school after an incident the worker must contact their line manager, inform them of the incident and complete an incident report form, making sure that the incident is factually recorded.

#### **5. Lone Visits**

There may be times when it is acceptable for one member of staff to complete a subsequent home visit, for example:

- Following the completion of a full risk assessment and a home visit has been deemed to be of low risk and it is agreed that one person can visit the home (repeat visits, etc.).
- Another professional/s is attending the house at the same time as the visit has been jointly co-ordinated.

In such cases the following steps should be taken:

- i. Your line manager must know the time of the appointment, (allow time to get there safely) and the time the appointment is likely to end. You must state the estimated time you are due back at the School.
- ii. You must ensure that you tell your buddy your expected time of return, if you do not return by this time your buddy will contact you or follow the emergency procedures if they don't get a response.

## **6. Role of the Parents**

Staff members have the right to work in a safe and healthy environment, free from abuse or the threat of harm. Staff members are responsible for their own safety and are empowered to make professional judgments appropriate to the circumstances they find themselves in.

Before any initial visit is made sufficient background information should be obtained by the school and an initial risk assessment undertaken.



**Expected staff behaviour during home visits**

**Staff behaviour:**

- Remain professional at all times.
- Be a good listener.
- Have specific goals or objectives for each visit.
- Realise the limitations of your role.
- Help parents/carers become more independent.
- Keep language appropriate.
- Remember that small improvements lead to big ones.
- Be yourself.
- Be confident.
- Respect cultural and ethnic values.
- Monitor your own behaviour; the parent/carer is also observing you.

**Personal safety during a home visit:**

- If you carry bags, keep your car keys and mobile phone on you (you can barricade yourself in a room / toilet and use your phone in an emergency).
- Survey the premises for exits and ways out in an emergency (also think about fire and that older people tend to barricade themselves inside).
- If the person you are visiting locks the front door (particularly deadlocks) ask them to please leave the key in the lock.
- Be wary of trip hazards that are both external and internal such as steps or lifted floor coverings, electrical wires.
- If there are dogs or other pets which concern you, ask that they be put away in a locked kennel or room.
- Do not wear expensive jewellery.
- Limit the amount of cash you carry.
- Dress conservatively.

**Travel safety tips when conducting a home visit:**

- Lock your car doors as soon as you get in (to prevent carjacking)
- Where practical do not park in the driveway (you could be blocked in) – but if you need to, think about reverse parking in, so you can simply drive out
- In a cul-de-sac, park in the direction of the cul-de-sac exit
- Approach your car with keys in hand

- Check the car interior before entering
- Keep doors locked at all times
- Hide your purse/packages/valuables so they are not open to view
- Avoid parking besides vans/trucks
- Park in well-lit areas and avoid parking in isolated areas

**Tips to consider if you are faced with aggression during a home visit:**

- Never enter a house if there is yelling, screaming, breaking glass etc. coming from within – call the police
- If an aggression incident occurs, remember to try and remain as calm as possible, speak slowly and calmly
- Stay out of rooms such as kitchens because there are a variety of weapons that could be used
- Try and keep a barrier (e.g. table) between you and the aggressor where practical
- Slowly try to move toward an exit, or consider a room you can barricade yourself in and use your cell phone to call police
- Try not to walk backwards as you risk tripping over
- At earliest opportunity call the Police, even if it is only the threat of assault; also, call your buddy to report the incident.
- Don't stand face to face (it makes you vulnerable to attacks)
- Don't enter a home with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Don't enter a home with someone who is inappropriately dressed

**INITIAL HOME VISIT RISK ASSESSMENT**

| Family Name:   |  | Address: |                     | Contact Details: |    |
|--|--|----------|---------------------|------------------|----|
|  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Date:  |  |          | By Whom:            |                  |    |
|  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
|  |  |          |                     | Yes              | No |
| Is anyone in the household known for violent offences?   |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Is anyone in the household known to misuse drugs or alcohol?   |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Have any risks been identified by any other agencies?  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Are there any pets in the household?   |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Are they threatening?  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Are you aware of any intimidating/threatening clients, relatives or friends living at or likely to visit the property? |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Are there any dangers/hazards associated with the property?  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Do you think contact should be made outside of the home?   |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Are you confident all safety measures are in place?  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| <b>Areas of Concern (if you have answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide further details)</b>       |  |          |                     |                  |    |
|  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Level of risk without control measures in place:   |  |          | High / Medium / Low |                  |    |
| Control measures in place to reduce risk:  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
|  |  |          |                     |                  |    |
| Level of risk without control measures in place:   |  |          | High / Medium / Low |                  |    |
| Date:  |  | Name:    |                     | Signed:          |    |
|  |  |          |                     |                  |    |

