

## **HOME VISITS POLICY**

### **Aims**

The aim of the home visit policy is to ensure good working practice and to provide guidelines in reducing risks to members of staff when undertaking home visits.

- To ensure that designated staff follow the correct procedure prior, during and after carrying out a home visit.
- That staff have followed Health and Safety procedures in notifying the school of home visit and expected return time.
- That necessary information has been obtained prior to home visit in order to carry out risk assessment.
- A general risk assessment should be prepared to cover home visits. (See attached risk assessment).

### **Reasons for home visits**

Staff make home visits in order to better meet the needs of the child and family. In promoting a partnership between parents and school, home visits provide the means for effective team problem-solving, observing children in their home environment, and encouraging parent involvement. Home visits may also lend distressed parents often much needed support to foster positive parenting. Effective home visiting furthers the mental, emotional, and physical health and development of the child by serving the whole family.

Home visits are important in helping the school to make contact with new, or hard to reach parents/carers. They are particularly useful as they enable the parent/carer to still have contact with the school, but in their own environment.

Home visits are to be used when:

- Pupils are refusing to come into school: this is normally the responsibility of the EWO but can be carried out by school staff or the school's Learning Mentors.
- New Foundation Stage pupils are about to join the school
- When there are attendance issues/concerns.
- When all other means of contact with a family has failed.

Home visits should not be undertaken by any member of staff without the knowledge of the Head of School or the assistant heads and, where practicable, parents/carers should be informed of the home visit prior to staff arriving.

### **Preparation for home visit**

- Visits should be undertaken where practicable by prior arrangement.
- For Health and Safety reasons the Head of School/Assistant Heads should be notified of whom you are visiting.
- The school should have the mobile phone numbers of the relevant staff
- Cultural sensitivity/awareness should be observed during home visit, e.g. by not sending a male member of staff out alone to see a Muslim mother.

**Any Child Protection concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with Designated Senior Person for Safeguarding on arrival back.**

### **Dealing with difficulties and boundaries**

#### **Set the tone**

- Be punctual when carrying out home visits.
- Introduce self and colleagues.
- Staff should always follow the client into the home; they must not enter the home first; the occupants may try to block the member(s) of staff in. Staff also do not know who is already present within the home.
- Establish social connection (small talk).
- Staff should sit near the door/exit and avoid letting the client sit between them and the door.
- Include other family members present in conversation.
- Modify the environment (babies crying, TV, other distractions).
- Settle at a work place, i.e., the kitchen or living room (ask for suggestions).
- Staff should remember to use their instincts, stay calm and act confidently.

#### **Containing Aggression**

It is important, even if someone is trying to provoke a member of staff, they should not respond in kind. Meeting aggression leads to confrontation and someone could get hurt.

Staff should stay calm and speak slowly and clearly; they should not argue, be patronizing or try to outsmart the person verbally. Breathing slowly helps to control one's own tension.

Avoid body language which may be misinterpreted, such as looking down on the aggressor; hands on hips; folded arms; any physical contact. Staff should keep their distance.

Staff should talk through the problem with the client; suggest going to see a colleague, suggest a walk or some fresh air - allow aggression to be diverted against inanimate objects, such as banging the table.

Compromise - offer the aggressor a way out of the situation.

**If a member of staff is unable to deflect or defuse the situation, they should get away - make an excuse to leave, e.g. remember an urgent appointment.**

**Staff should trust their instincts and not underestimate the situation. Things can get out of control very quickly. Be prepared!**

Whilst talking, assess possible means of escape, should the situation worsen.

**Staff should never turn their back.** If they are attempting to get away, staff should move gradually backwards. The Police should be contacted if physical abuse/assault has occurred.

Any inappropriate, abusive, aggressive or violent behaviour towards a worker during a home visit should be recorded and discussed with the head teacher.

All workers should have access to debrief in the event of a difficult home visit.

### **Using Information Received**

All information received will be used confidentially and will help staff to learn more about the educational, social, emotional and development needs of pupils.