

Home Visits Guidance & Procedure

In accordance with the schools Health and Safety Policy, these guidance and procedure notes are designed to ensure that all staff members conducting home visits are safeguarded and necessary risk assessments prior to conducting visits are carried out.

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1 Purpose

Visits to families in their homes are necessary in order to provide relevant support and/or advice regarding attendance, school and welfare issues.

Home visits should normally be pre-arranged, however for the purposes of promoting attendance and ensuring pupil safety, unannounced “safe and well” visits will also be necessary at times.

Home visits should ideally be conducted in pairs unless agreed with a Senior Leadership member of staff prior to visiting (e.g. an exceptional circumstance may be delivering an item to the doorstep).

2 The legal framework

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, employers have a duty to safeguard the health and safety of their employees. This duty applies whether the employee is working at the usual workplace or off-site. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess the health and safety risks faced by employees and take appropriate preventative measures, where necessary.

The main safety risk associated with home visiting is that of violence, although risks may also arise through stress brought on by the isolation experienced by some teachers working as home tutors.

3 Before the visit

Prior to conducting a home visit, an assessment of risk must be done to consider:

- a. Staff members conducting the visit are responsible for their personal safety and assessing if the visit should take place and if any specific safety measures need to be taken.
- b. An assessment of any risks recorded about the family or property should be done (e.g. parental aggression, dogs/animals, known criminal activity, police have advised extra caution etc.)
- c. An assessment of any risks in terms of available parking or the area of the visit which may increase risk to personal safety must be done.
- d. All concerns must be discussed and recorded with line manager and/or member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT) prior to the visit taking place.
- e. Decision from above discussion to be recorded as to whether extra precautions are necessary in order to preserve staff safety e.g. additional safety measure prior to entering the house (see below conducting visits), a joint police visit is required, or if the visit is deemed safe.
- f. Staff members making the visit must liaise with the Receptionist/SSAs whilst on visits and must sign in and out at Reception. Staff members making the visit must liaise with the Receptionist/SSAs whilst on visits and must sign in and out at Reception.
- g. Staff members making the visit must record the appointment in their diary, ensuring the electronic calendar is updated with time, approximate duration and address of the intended visit;
- h. The risk assessment, (Appendix 1), must be completed before any visit takes place and is signed by the visiting members of staff and authorised by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

NB. If the safety of an additional pupil is highlighted whilst the staff members are off school site, meaning that an additional visit is required and needs to be added to the list of visits being conducted, the extra visit(s) must be added to the electronic diary remotely (if accessible) or telephoned through to Receptionist/SSAs and duly noted; and any information about risk must be passed on to the Safeguarding Lead to be assessed.

4 Conducting the visit

When conducting a home visit staff should ensure that:

Undertaking visits

The policy sets out general guidance on home visiting and home tutoring. It should be noted that whereas home visits may be an unlikely (though possible) requirement for classroom teachers, they are, by definition, an essential part of a home tutor's job. Support staff employed in a school/home liaison role will also have this as an element of their job description. Unless part of a job description, such visits should be kept to a minimum and all the steps advised in the policy followed in full.

Whether home visits take place on a regular or occasional basis, staff need to feel confident that they are not being placed at risk, either of violence or of allegations of abuse from pupils or their families. The health and safety of school staff must always take precedence when the need to make home visits is being considered. The first question should always be: "Should this visit be made by an external Social Worker/Education Welfare Officer (or equivalent), or someone else trained for and specializing in home visiting?"

For the majority of staff and head teachers, for whom home visiting is not part of their job description, it is recommended that, wherever possible, meetings should take place in school. Home visits by staff should always be authorised by their Senior Link Lead and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Wherever possible, staff should be accompanied by someone trained in home visiting, for example, an Education Welfare Officer, or by An Attendance Officer who is trained in such matters.

For very young children it may be possible to co-ordinate home visits with visits made by health visitors, or even to avoid home visits by meeting at the local child health clinic, with the health visitor present. All employers and employees should have read the policy on home visiting which should be available to all teachers and school staff who are involved in making home visits. Staff should check travel / car insurance arrangements, so they are clear they are fully covered when undertaking home visits.

Avoiding the risk of violence - a checklist

The Trust has a duty to assess the health and safety risks faced by staff making home visits and to put in place appropriate preventative measures, where necessary. The risk assessment (Appendix 1) supports staff in achieving this, along with the following non-exhaustive list which includes a number of suggested safe systems of work, which staff making occasional home visits, as well as planned home tuition with home tutors, should adopt to ensure their own safety.

Headteachers and other Senior Leaders who may need to authorise home visits or co-ordinate the home tuition with external agencies such as CAMH, medical teams, access teams, traveler education and other such services, will endeavour to ensure staff safety and make staff aware of the following checklist, risk assessment and procedures:

- Are fully aware of relevant risks and ways to minimise them, as set out in the risk assessment (Appendix 1)
- Are appropriately trained in strategies for the de-escalation and / or prevention of violence
- Are briefed about the area in which they will be working
- Are provided with all relevant information on particular pupils, their medical needs and any aggressive tendencies, as well as the background of parents/carers, including any aggressive tendencies, which can help prevent violent incidents occurring
- Are aware of the existence of aggressive pets

- Are aware of the need to leave an itinerary with expected departure/arrival times with a responsible contact, who knows how to react if the person has not returned when expected and to phone colleagues about possible changes of plan
- Carry, and keep switched on, a mobile phone so they are contactable at all times
- Receive a pre-arranged telephone call from this responsible contact approximately ten minutes into any visit at a new address to check all is well, and that a code word has been determined beforehand which can be used to summon assistance should this be required
- Have arranged a prior appointment with the parent/carer whom they are going to meet and do not enter the house if either the child is at home alone or if the parent/carer, with whom the appointment has been made, is not there
- Ensure that doors of teaching / tutoring rooms are left open for greater transparency and safety
- Appreciate the importance of having a clear exit route, and for this purpose position themselves where they have easy egress through the door
- Are aware of the importance of leaving the home immediately if they feel uncomfortable in any way (an ongoing risk assessment)
- Should not give lifts to pupils or family members, or teach / tutor elsewhere other than the location specified on the risk assessment and are aware that they must avoid, and be seen to avoid, any act or omission which could call their professionalism into question or otherwise place them in a compromising position
- Always inform the parent/carer if finishing the lesson / tutoring before the agreed time
- Carry forms for reporting incidents
- Avoid evening visits wherever possible
- Carry an identity card, which should not be worn around the neck, but shown on a first home visit and then stored safely
- Consider carrying a personal alarm
- Do not carry large quantities of cash or take credit/debit cards when making home visits; consider screen lock security of mobile phone and security of keys.
- All staff must report an up-to-date record of incidents reported following home visits and visits should be discontinued where there is a known risk of violence or other unacceptable behaviour.

If any safeguarding concerns arise from/or during the home visit these must be reported via normal safeguarding channels (e.g. MyConcern, report to DSL).

5 Managing an unexpected concern

Home Visit Procedure if an unexpected concern arises about safety at or during a visit:

If concern is noted prior to entering the property:

- Risk assess whether it is safe to continue with the visit
- If in doubt, do not enter
- Arrange for Receptionist/SSA/SLT to call once inside the property as per above instructions.

If the concern arises during the visit:

- If you feel intimidated/threatened or uncomfortable – terminate the home visit in a courteous way, making an excuse to leave if necessary.
- **If you feel you are in immediate danger** – do not excuse, leave the property immediately.

6 Return from a visit

It is the responsibility of the staff members conducting the home visit(s) to ensure the Receptionist, SSA or SLT is aware that they are safe following completion of the visit(s). Failure to do so will result in the following actions:

Procedure if staff conducting a visit fails to return or make contact with school

If a contact has not been made by the person home visiting within a reasonably expected time following the finishing time of their scheduled visits (suggested an hour):

- a. Contact the member of staff via mobile;
- b. If no contact can be made raise concern with SLT;
- c. SLT will attempt to contact the staff member again via mobile, and if required, with staff member's next of kin to check if any contact has been received. SLT will then also try to contact families on scheduled visit list using contact numbers on school database – purpose: to identify the address member of staff was last seen;
- d. If contact cannot be made - Police to be informed to seek advice on next action required.

7 Dealing with aggression

Action following an incident of verbal or physical aggression by a Parent, Carer or Student whilst conducting a home visit

The incident must be reported and logged with the Senior Leadership Team. In respect of the student the Academy behaviour sanctions/ consequences will be followed. In respect of parent/carers this will be passed on to the relevant Local Authority to record on the Violence at Work Register. Refer also to the Meridian Policy Responding to aggression, abuse or violence from parents, carers & visitors Policy. Threats of violence should also be reported to the Police.

The file/database, where student records are held, including MyConcern, and the school MIS, should be highlighted to indicate caution at further visits and the DSL must be informed.

8 Malicious allegations

Home tutors, those delivering tutoring from the school and other school staff who may have cause to visit pupils at home can be particularly vulnerable to allegations of physical or sexual abuse being made against them. The measures recommended above will also greatly assist in minimising the risks of allegations of abuse. Planning and organising the visit, obtaining all available information on a particular pupil and their family/carers and home environment, and ensuring that another responsible adult will be present at all times to avoid being alone with the pupils, are all sensible measures as part of a safe system of work.

Staff undertaking home visits will have signed and read all relevant Safeguarding and Child Protection policies in the context of home visits and on their own code of conduct and policies regarding restraint.

If incidents do occur, staff should record all details as soon as practicable after the incident, before precise recollections of events fade. A contemporaneous (real time) account of an incident can greatly assist if a complaint or allegation is made by a pupil or parent subsequently and may provide valuable evidence. Staff should be aware of school or employer procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse and ensure that incidents are reported speedily according to the procedures.

Appendix 1: Home tuition and occasional home visits risk assessment for all staff

RISK ASSESSMENT RECORD

ACTIVITY and/or ENVIRONMENT TO BE ASSESSED: Home Tuition and occasional visits

KEY (People at risk)	Likelihood (L)	Severity (S)	Risk Calculation	Risk Rating
E = Employee P = Public C = Contractors V = Visitors EM = Expectant Mothers	1. Very Low (rare/very unlikely) 2. Low (unlikely) 3. Medium (could occur/possible) 4. High (likely to occur/probable) 5. Very High (near certain to occur)	1. Insignificant (nuisance/discomfort) 2. Minor (no lost time) 3. Moderate (time loss) 4. Significant (serious/incapacity to work) 5. Major (Death)	Likelihood x Severity = Rating	1-6 LOW RISK Monitor 8-12 MEDIUM RISK Monitor, review & reduce risk where possible 14-25 HIGH RISK Further Action Required

1. Hazards Identified and potential harm it could cause	2. People At Risk	3. Controls in Place	4. Risk Rating				5. Further Action Required/ Recommendations
			L	S	Score	Risk	
No adult present	E	Staff not to stay if appropriate adult is not present					Record visit in log Report to SLT Letter to parent
Aggressive Pet	E	- Tetanus injection - Hepatitis injections - Ask for animal to be in alternate room or outside during tuition					Report to police Letter to parent Use of alternative premises
Aggressive Pupil	E	- Avoid confrontation - Leave session if pupil does not calm. - Inform SLT & complete relevant reporting forms					Report to police
Staff threatened by parent in home	E	- Staff to leave - Report to SLT/line manager - Seek medical advice if needed					Report to police Use of alternative premises or adult
Staff 'tricked' into entering house and detained	E	- Contact school if possible - School routine to contact staff at set times each session with					Report to police

		agreed message to confirm safety.					
Unacceptable behaviour to/by members of family witnessed	E	• Leave premises • Contact school/safeguarding					Report to appropriate service, e.g. police, social services
Illegal substances visible	E	• Explain situation to parent • Leave premises • Inform SLT/line manager					Letter to parent before next session
Theft of items from tutor	E	• Do not take valuable items or large amounts of money to tuition. • Explain situation to parent • Inform SLT/line manager					Report to police
Tutor involved in accident on route to/from venue	E	• Tutor to phone school on arrival and departure at each venue • Emergency contact details for home tutor to be held in school					Maintain vehicle Belong to a breakdown organization Carry torch, phone for emergencies
Malicious allegations	E	• Pre plan visit and document • Visit in pairs where possible • Avoid being alone • Record details should any such incident occur • Staff read and understood all safeguarding and CP policies and procedures. • Statement of procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff followed					Report to Headteacher If about the Headteacher, report to the CEO and Chair of AC

Summary of personal safety guidelines for home tutors

- Always have a mobile phone charged and available
- Do not give your address or home/mobile phone numbers to pupils and/or parents and do not contact them on your home or mobile phone as they can then access your personal numbers.
- Do not give your mobile phone to the young person to use for any reason
- Keep your personal items, purse/wallet, car keys, etc safe and secure
- Ensure the venue is suitable for tuition and that there is table and chairs available – visit first
- Arrange for an appropriate adult to be present if tuition is in the home or use a public building, e.g. library
- Ensure your school/service has a copy of your tuition commitments and venues
- Arrange regular contact with school/service i.e. a minimum of on arrival and departure from each session
- Give an emergency contact name and number to your school/service
- Keep a diary of each session – including brief notes of work covered, people present and any other appropriate information, e.g. issues with pupil and/or parent
- Ask for a copy of any individual pupil risk assessments for your information. Compile your own risk assessment of each venue you use.
- Report any concerns to school/service as soon as possible