



# Home Visits

## Policy & Procedures



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School Link: Claire Ward

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## **I Purpose**

- 1.1 At Wade Deacon High School, we recognise that parents / carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. The purpose of the Policy is to specify the procedures for carrying out a home visit safely and effectively. For the purpose of this policy, a home visit is a visit that requires member(s) of staff to enter the home of a parent / carer in the case of an emergency visit or a procedural visit. It is acceptable, in some cases, to not enter the home in order to conduct a welfare check.

## **2 Home Visits: Aims & Reasons**

- 2.1 The aim of a home visit is to:

- Establish a partnership between parents / carers and staff so that all parties share their knowledge about the child to enable the individual needs of the child to be met.
- Develop and strengthen relationships with parents / carers for the best interests of the child.

- 2.2 Home visits are important in helping the school to contact new or hard to reach parents / carers. They are particularly useful as they enable the parents / carers 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 whilst still being on roll at the school.
- When all other means of contact with a family have failed.
- To meet with parents / 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 parents / 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 parents / carers have not elicited a response and we have any welfare or safeguarding concerns for the student.
- To work with and support parents / 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 exclusion 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 has been refused).

*The above list is not exhaustive as other situations may arise when a home visit is required however, this will be discussed with the DSL (or Deputies) or Principal prior to authorisation for a visit.*

### **3 Benefits**

3.1 Home visits have many benefits. For parents, carers and children, a home visit gives the opportunity to meet a key person in a setting that they are familiar and comfortable with.

3.2 Other opportunities are to:

- Establish a positive contact with a key member of staff who is supporting the child.
- Meet family members that are important to the child.
- Talk about the child and their needs.

### **4 Procedures for Home Visits**

4.1 All home visits conducted by staff must be authorised by the DSL / Deputies (DEE / HNI) or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

4.2 In addition, wherever possible parents / carers should be informed of the home visit prior to arrival. There will be exceptions to this for example, a visit to confirm that an absent child is at home when parents / carers are not responding to telephone calls / text messages or if an emergency safeguarding visit is required where it would not be appropriate to call ahead.

### **5 Before the Visit**

5.1 Prior to the visit, it is the responsibility of the member(s) of staff conducting the visit to:

- Be familiar with the school's policy and procedures 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 parents / carers to come into the school.



- Ensure others in the Pastoral / Care, Guidance and Support team know where you are going and when to expect you to return to school.
- Sign in and out of school before and after a home visit.
- Arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you. Where possible, home visits should be conducted in pairs. Clarify each person's role during the home visit to the parent / carer.
- Make sure you are well informed about the subject of the visit – collect and take with you any necessary documentation.
- Consider who you need to see, e.g. one or both parents / carers, with or without the child.
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances.
- Wherever possible make an appointment to establish a time (via phone call or letter) convenient to the family and to ensure that everyone you want to see will be present.
- Refer to the 'Lone Working & Home Visits Step Analysis of Risk Assessment' (Appendix I), and inform Catherine Rogers / Pupil Services of your intended location before departing for a home visit.
- Consider the family carefully when deciding who will conduct the home visit; in some cases, gender may need to be considered.

## 6 During the Visit

6.1 The member(s) of staff conducting a home visit need to make sure they follow the procedures below:

- Park in a well-lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving.
- Dress appropriately.
- Ensure that where possible no animals are in the room where a meeting takes place.
- Introduce yourself, have identification available and explain again the purpose of the visit.
- Carry your identification; do not use a necklace lanyard.
- 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 / carer has delegated to be there in their absence. Where this is the case, ensure permission has been granted to speak to the nominated adult about the child.
- Do not speak to siblings other than to ask if their parent / carer is available.
- 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.
- Be very aware of body language that may indicate any form of opinion or judgement about the home situation or the personal circumstances of the family.
- If you are concerned that a child / young person is in the home inappropriately alone, unsupervised or in danger, you must follow the school's safeguarding procedures for raising a cause for concern.
- If you feel that a child / young person is in immediate danger, contact emergency services **999**.
- Assure parents / carers that you will treat anything they tell you sensitively and will only share with relevant professionals. Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting.
- Be sensitive to culture and religion.
- Be professional; give professional advice and information rather than personal opinions.
- Be sympathetic, but remain neutral - Don't get personally involved.
- Be discreet but assertive about the direction of the conversation; do not gossip about the school or staff.
- Do not stay too long - Keep to the point.
- Do not carry large sums of money, items of worth or personal information when making a home visit.

## **7 After the visit**

### **7.1** All home visits will need to be followed up upon return to school.

- Sign back into school and let the relevant Pastoral / Care, Guidance and Support team know that you have arrived back safely.
- Log the visit and all relevant information on CPOMS under the category of "home visit".
- If you are not returning directly to school, telephone the school after the visit to say you have safely completed your home visit.
- Any safeguarding concerns should be immediately followed up, using the School's Safeguarding policy.
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved with those particular children. This includes making comments or judgements about the situation at home.
- If an incident does occur, the visitor should record all details as soon as possible after the incident, to ensure that reports are contemporaneous and as concise as possible.



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

## **8 Action to take if you are threatened**

8.1 The protection and safety of our staff is important. If a member of staff is threatened in any way, it is important that the following actions are taken:

- If you are threatened or prevented from leaving, stay calm and try to control the situation.
- Try to appear confident, speak slowly and clearly and not be enticed into an argument. Try to diffuse the situation by saying you will seek advice from a senior member of staff or colleague.
- Keep your distance; never touch or turn your back on someone who is angry.
- If staff attend as a pair, wait outside the property until all staff involved have left the premises.
- Consider whether sending out two members of staff may escalate the situation.
- If working as a pair, agree a code word (safe word) or phrase to alert a colleague that you need assistance or should leave.
- The same code word should be used if you contact school to alert them that you are in danger and need support.
- Staff must leave the property and reach a place of safety and inform school immediately.
- If you are concerned about your safety do not visit.
- It is strongly recommended that no one makes a home visit of an evening.
- If staff are in immediate danger and are able to do so, they should call 999.





## ADDENDUM

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC – March 2020

This policy should be utilised for any home visit during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please refer to government guidance in relation to social distancing and necessary travel before any home visit is conducted.

The above policy remains relevant with additional measures to be considered stated below:

- Where possible contact should be made prior to the visit to ascertain whether any household members are symptomatic with Covid-19. If so, do not attend the house unless absolutely necessary. You must consult with the DSL or a member of the Senior Leadership Team before any visit in this case.
- Where a visit is necessary two members of staff should attend but travel separately, using their own means of transport.
- Staff who are “working from home” may conduct a home visit when necessary, but this must be discussed with the linked member of the Senior Leadership Team. There should still be two members of staff present.
- Staff must not be accompanied on a home visit with anyone who is not employed by the school.
- Staff must adhere to social distancing measures and remain at least 2 metres away from all individuals. They should not enter the property.
- If staff feel there is a need to enter the property, this must be discussed with the DSL or a member of the Senior Leadership Team before this occurs.
- If staff are leaving items for the family which may include work, food or other essential items, they must use protective gloves, wash their hands thoroughly before and after the visit and leave the items outside of the property.
- If items are being collected, for example, work that a child has completed, the same hygiene procedures should be followed with items collected from outside of the property.
- All home visits must be logged on CPOMs under the category of “Parent / Carer Contact” then the subcategory of “Home Visit” and “Covid-19”.
- Anyone completing a home visit should clearly have the Key Worker Vehicle Sign clearly on display.