

# Alwyn and Courthouse Federation

## Home Visit Policy and Procedure

**ALL HOME VISITS CONDUCTED BY STAFF *MUST* BE AUTHORISED BY THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (OR MEMBER OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM) PRIOR TO THE VISIT TAKING PLACE.**

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 emergency safeguarding visits.

### Home Visit Definition:

A home visit is a visit that requires member(s) of staff to enter the home of a parent, carer, or guardian in the case of an emergency visit or a procedural visit.

### Aims

At Alwyn and Courthouse we recognise that parents/carers play a vital role in the education and development of their children, thereby fostering a collaborative and supportive relationship between home and school.

The aim of a home visit is:

- To establish a relational partnership between school staff and parents/carers so that all stakeholders share their knowledge about the child to enable the individual needs of the child to be met.
- To develop and strengthen relationships with Parents/carers for the best interests of the child.

### Reasons for home visits:

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:

- Children are struggling to come into school
- When there are attendance issues/concerns
- When all other means of contact with a family has 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 a parent/carers 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 child.
- 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 suspension 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 had been refused).

## Benefits

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. 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.

## Procedures

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

### Before the Visit

- Be familiar with the school's policy and procedure 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)
- Complete the Home Visit form ensuring it is signed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or member of the Senior Leadership Team).
- Discuss with the Designated Safeguarding Lead whether it is deemed appropriate for the visit to be made alone or whether an additional person is required to protect professional integrity and ensure staff safety.
- Arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you; home visits should be conducted in pairs. Clarify each person's role.
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances.
- Consider who you need to see, e.g. one or both parents/carers, with or without the child.
- Wherever possible make an appointment to establish a time convenient for the family and to ensure that everyone you want to see will be present. Either make a phone call or send a letter.
- Inform the DSL and Head of School of your intended location before departing for a home visit.

### During the Visit

- Contact school office/Head of School before you go in and estimate the time of the Home Visit conclusion.
- Park in a well-lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving.
- Dress appropriately.
- Ensure that you have checked with parents/carers regarding pets/animals and that you are comfortable with the room where the meeting takes place.
- Introduce yourself, have identification available and explain again the purpose of the visit.
- Do not enter the premises unless invited in by a responsible adult.
- 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 (parents/carers) or another responsible adult whom a parent/carer has delegated to be there in their absence and they have given the school permission to speak to 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.
- Do not enter a child's/young person's bedroom unless appropriate and accompanied by an adult.
- If you are concerned that a child/young person is in the home inappropriately alone/unsupervised contact the school safeguarding team straight away to discuss your observations or to seek immediate advice from them if you are uncertain whether the child is alone/unsupervised. If appropriate the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make a referral to social care.

- If you feel that a child/young person is in immediate danger contact emergency services 999.
- Assure the parents/carers that you will treat anything they tell you sensitively and will only tell the head teacher or other appropriate staff. Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting. Do not promise not to relay information to school. Remember that under child protection procedures you must report disclosures or suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Be sensitive to the culture, religion etc of the home.
- 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 get drawn into discussing individual members of staff.
- Do not stay too long. Keep to the point.
- Contact school office and complete appropriate Home Visit Form to evidence visit.

### **After the visit**

- Any Child Protection concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead on arrival back to school.
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved with those particular children.

### **Home Visit Form**

- It is essential that staff write a short report on every visit they make.
- If an incident does occur the visitor should record all details as soon as possible after the incident, using unemotional language before precise recollection of events fade.
- If an accusation of abuse is made against the visit/visitor advice should be sought from the head teacher as soon as possible.

### **Making Safe Home Visits: summary**

#### **Before**

- Be clear about the purpose of the visit.
- Arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you.
- Be well informed about the subject of the visit.
- Always make sure that the school knows where you are going, has your mobile telephone number and your safe word is recorded on the schools "**Lone Working Risk Assessment**"

#### **During**

- Carry a mobile phone with you.
- Consider who you need to see.
- Make a prior appointment to establish a time of visit.
- Carry identification.
- Do not stay too long.
- Introduce yourself.
- Be professional.
- Don't carry large sums of money.

#### **After**

Report back in school or if you are not returning directly to school, telephone the school after the visit to say you have left the residence.

**If you are concerned about your safety do not visit.**

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

- 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 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 arrived.
- Consider whether sending out two members of staff may escalate the difficulties.

- 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 if you have any concerns about personal safety and inform school immediately.

Appendix 1

Staff Member		Job title			
Parent/Carer		Child Name			
Home Address		Reason for Calling			
Date & Time		Second Person			
Comments					
Signed		Name (staff)			
Signed		Name (staff)			
Signed		Parent/carers			
Visit authorised by Safeguarding Lead:		Date		Time	

This copy of this **MUST** be left at the home. Scan on device for school copy.

Visit Notes	
Actions Required and by whom	