



Garstang Community Academy HOME VISIT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Date Reviewed: July 2021
Date of Next Review: July 2023

Home Visit Policy and Procedure

ALL HOME VISITS CONDUCTED BY STAFF *MUST* BE AUTHORISED BY THE SAFEGUARDING LEAD OR HEADTEACHER.

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/messages or emergency safeguarding visits.

Home Visit Definition:

A home visit is a visit that requires members of staff to visit the home of a parent/carers in the case of an emergency visit or a procedural visit.

Aims

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 student to enable the individual needs of the student to be met.
- To develop and strengthen relationships with parents/carers for the best interests of the student.

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 students are refusing to come into school
- When there are attendance issues/concerns
- When students are being educated at home
- 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 student to have that discussion in their own home rather than at school *or* where it would be difficult for parents/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 student 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 the student attend school where attendance is an issue.
- To collect from or drop a student off at home where there are concerns for a student's welfare if they travelled by other means.
- To drop off or collect work for a student when they are completing school work at home e.g. following a fixed term exclusion or medical issue.
- To visit a student 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 student 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 students, a home visit gives the opportunity to meet key members of staff in a setting that they are familiar and comfortable with. Other opportunities are to:

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

Procedures

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

Before the Visit

- Be familiar with the school's policy and procedure for home visits.
- Ensure you have received authorisation for the home visit from the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher.
- 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).
- 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 subject of the visit. Collect any necessary documentation. Check on school's policy and practice.
- 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 and appropriate make an appointment to establish a time convenient to the family and to ensure that everyone you want to see will be present.
- Inform Reception of your intended location, estimated time of arrival and departure, mobile number and safe word before departing for a home visit.

During the Visit

- Ensure you have a mobile phone.
- Park in a well-lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving.
- Wait until both staff members are present at the address before commencing the home visit.
- Introduce yourself, ensuring your identification is clearly visible, and explain 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 (parent/carer) or another responsible adult whom a parent/carer has delegated to be there in their absence and have given school permission to speak to about the student for whom we are making the home visit.
- Do not speak to siblings other than to ask if their parents/carers are 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.
- If you are concerned that a child/young person is in the home inappropriately alone/unsupervised contact the schools 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 you feel that a child/young person is in immediate danger contact emergency services 999 and update the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.
- Assure 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 the child protection procedures you must report disclosures or suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Person.
- Be professional; give professional advice and information rather than personal opinions.

Action to take if you feel 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.
- 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.

After the visit

- Report back to school and log the home visit on Synergy.
- Any Child Protection concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with the Safeguarding team immediately on arrival back to school.
- If you are not returning directly to school, telephone the school after the visit to say you have left the home visit and speak to a member of the Safeguarding team to report any child protection concerns.

Recording the Home Visit

- It is essential that staff write a short report on every visit they make and save this as a Pastoral Log on Synergy.
- If an incident does occur the visitor should record all details as soon as possible after the incident, before precise recollection of events fall from their memory.
- Any concerns must be discussed with the Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher.