HOME VISITING POLICY

Building trust. Understanding context.
Safeguarding effectively



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

This policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework
and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures and guidance.

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
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OUR COMMITMENT

At Riverside Bridge School, every policy reflects our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and ambitious school community in which every pupil is valued, every voice matters and every family is respected and supported.

Our policies translate our values into consistent practice. They support high expectations, clear responsibilities, effective partnership and informed decision-making, ensuring that the needs, rights, wellbeing and future outcomes of our pupils remain at the heart of our work.

We work collaboratively, act with integrity and continually reflect upon and improve our practice to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Our Policy Principles underpin how we work together and guide the decisions and actions we take to support every pupil and their families.



POLICY PURPOSE & FRAMEWORK

Riverside Bridge School policies set out the expectations, responsibilities and approaches that support safe, consistent and high-quality practice across the school. They translate our values, statutory responsibilities and professional expectations into clear guidance for everyday decision-making and practice.

Each policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures, statutory guidance and school frameworks referenced within the document.

Policies apply to the members of the school community identified within each document, including staff, governors, parents and carers, volunteers, contractors and other professionals where relevant. Everyone is expected to understand and apply the requirements appropriate to their role and to seek further guidance where clarification is required.

CURRICULUM DRIVERS



Our Drivers provide a shared golden thread across curriculum, school life, policy and leadership, helping ensure that our decisions and practice remain focused on the experiences and futures we want for every pupil.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy sets out Riverside Bridge School's approach to home visiting. It explains the principles, expectations, responsibilities and arrangements through which home visits are planned, authorised, undertaken and recorded safely, professionally and proportionately, supporting safeguarding, family partnership, attendance, admissions, early intervention and wider pupil outcomes.

At we recognise that effective support for pupils with complex SEND sometimes requires professional engagement beyond the school site. Home visits can provide valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships with families, understand a pupil within the context of their everyday life, identify barriers, support transitions and attendance, and coordinate appropriate support.

Home visits are not routine inspections of family life. They must always have a clear and legitimate purpose, be proportionate to the identified need and be undertaken with respect for the dignity, privacy, culture and rights of the pupil and family. Wherever possible, visits should be planned collaboratively and families should understand why the visit is taking place, who will attend and what the intended outcomes are.

Our approach is supportive rather than enforcement-led. Home visits may contribute to safeguarding, attendance support, admissions, welfare, Bridge for Families, Early Help or multi-agency working, but they do not replace statutory responsibilities held by Children's Social Care, health services, the Police or other external agencies. Where safeguarding concerns indicate that statutory action is required, this must not be delayed by the home-visiting process.

Safeguarding is central to all home visiting. Staff must remain professionally curious, respond promptly to concerns and follow the school's safeguarding procedures where information or observations indicate that a child may be at risk. Staff are not expected to investigate safeguarding concerns themselves.

Staff safety is equally important. No member of staff is expected to place themselves at unreasonable risk in order to undertake or complete a visit. Appropriate planning, risk assessment, staffing, communication and check-in arrangements must be in place according to the circumstances of the visit.

Professional boundaries must be maintained throughout. Home visiting can involve entering a family's private environment and may reveal sensitive information that would not otherwise be known to school staff. Staff must therefore act respectfully, objectively and within the limits of their professional role, record information proportionately and share it only where there is a legitimate professional or safeguarding need.

Home visiting forms part of Riverside Bridge School's wider approach to partnership with families. Where visits are undertaken as part of Bridge for Families, they should support co-production, practical problem-solving and meaningful consistency between home and school without seeking to impose school routines or practice within family life.

Our responsibility to pupils, families and the school community

Riverside Bridge School has a responsibility to ensure that home visits are purposeful, safe, respectful and professionally accountable, and that they contribute positively to pupil safety, wellbeing, participation and outcomes.

In delivering this responsibility, we will:

- ensure every home visit has a clear rationale and intended outcome;
- consider whether a home visit is the most appropriate and proportionate form of intervention;
- obtain appropriate authorisation before visits take place;
- consider known safeguarding, environmental and staff-safety risks;
- select staff whose role, competence and relationship with the family are appropriate to the purpose of the visit;
- maintain clear professional boundaries and respect family privacy and dignity;
- communicate the purpose and arrangements for visits clearly wherever this is appropriate;
- make reasonable adjustments to support accessible communication and meaningful family participation;
- maintain professional curiosity while avoiding assumptions or judgement;
- respond immediately to safeguarding concerns in accordance with school procedures;
- ensure staff withdraw where continuing a visit would expose them or others to unacceptable risk;
- maintain accurate, factual and proportionate records;
- ensure information is stored and shared lawfully and securely;
- coordinate with other professionals or agencies where this is appropriate;
- provide staff with appropriate training, supervision and debriefing; and
- review home-visiting practice to strengthen safeguarding, partnership and staff safety.

Through these commitments, we aim to ensure that home visiting strengthens understanding and partnership whilst maintaining clear safeguards for pupils, families and staff.

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APPROVED BY: Governing Board

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Section 01

PURPOSE

Strengthening partnership. Understanding need. Supporting outcomes.

Home visiting is an important part of Riverside Bridge School's commitment to safeguarding, partnership working and early intervention. By developing a greater understanding of pupils within the context of their home lives, staff are better able to build trusting relationships with families, identify and remove barriers to engagement, and work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities.

Riverside Bridge School recognises that effective safeguarding, attendance support, admissions planning and family partnership extend beyond the school site. Home visits provide valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships, understand individual circumstances, promote consistency between home and school, and ensure that support is responsive to the needs of the whole family. They form an important part of the school's wider commitment to inclusive practice, early intervention and collaborative working.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear, consistent and safe framework for planning, authorising, undertaking and recording home visits undertaken on behalf of Riverside Bridge School. It sets out expectations for professional conduct, safeguarding practice, staff safety, accountability and partnership working, ensuring that all visits are purposeful, proportionate, evidence-informed and aligned with statutory guidance and the school's values.

Home visits are undertaken to support families, promote pupil well-being, strengthen communication and collaboration between home and school, and remove barriers to participation, learning and attendance. They are supportive rather than enforcement-led and complement, but do not replace, statutory safeguarding processes or the responsibilities of external agencies where these are required.

Section 02

SCOPE

Defining application. Clarifying responsibility.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and professionals undertaking, supporting, authorising or contributing to home visits on behalf of Riverside Bridge School. This includes members of the Senior Leadership Team, teachers, support staff, Family Liaison staff, Attendance staff, therapists and other professionals accompanying school staff during visits.

The policy applies to all home visits undertaken as part of the school's safeguarding, attendance, admissions, family support and wider pastoral responsibilities, including:

- pre-admission and transition visits;
- attendance, welfare and safeguarding visits;
- visits undertaken as part of the Bridge for Families – Home Support Programme;
- targeted family support and early intervention;
- multi-agency visits and joint working with external professionals;
- other home visits authorised by the Senior Leadership Team where these support the welfare, participation or educational outcomes of the pupil.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Attendance Policy, Bridge for Families – Home Support Programme Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Lone Working Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

Section 03

UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

Safeguarding first. Respecting families. Acting proportionately.

All home visits undertaken by Riverside Bridge School are guided by the principles of safeguarding, partnership and professional practice. Every visit should contribute positively to the safety, well-being, participation and outcomes of the pupil whilst maintaining the dignity, privacy and rights of the family.
Home visits are founded upon the following principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount. Safeguarding considerations underpin all planning, decision-making and professional actions before, during and after every visit.
- Families are valued partners. Parents and carers bring unique knowledge and expertise about their child. Home visits provide opportunities to listen, build trusting relationships and work collaboratively to achieve shared outcomes.
- Visits are purposeful and proportionate. Every home visit must have a clear rationale, agreed objectives and an identified benefit for the pupil and family. Home visits should always represent the least intrusive and most appropriate means of achieving those objectives.
- Professional curiosity is maintained. Staff remain observant, respectful and professionally curious, seeking to understand the wider circumstances that may influence a pupil's safety, well-being, communication, attendance or engagement, whilst avoiding assumptions or judgement.
- Staff safety is essential. The school has a duty to protect the health, safety and well-being of employees undertaking home visits. Appropriate planning, risk assessment, communication and support arrangements must therefore be in place before any visit takes place.
- Professional boundaries are maintained. Staff act with integrity, respect and professionalism at all times, maintaining appropriate boundaries and ensuring that communication with families remains supportive, factual and consistent with the school's values.

Section 04

PURPOSES OF HOME VISITS

Clarifying purpose. Responding to need. Supporting families.

Home visits are undertaken only where they represent an appropriate, proportionate and purposeful means of supporting a pupil or family. Every visit must have a clearly identified purpose, agreed intended outcomes and appropriate authorisation prior to taking place.

Home visits may be undertaken to:

- support admissions, transitions and induction for new pupils;
- strengthen relationships between home and school;
- promote regular attendance and reduce barriers to school engagement;
- undertake welfare checks where concerns have been identified;
- respond to safeguarding concerns or support safeguarding enquiries in accordance with statutory guidance;
- provide targeted family support or early intervention;
- model or collaboratively explore communication, regulation, independence or learning approaches within the home environment as part of Bridge for Families, where these are meaningful and appropriate for the pupil and family;
- contribute to Early Help assessments, Child in Need planning, Child Protection planning or other multi-agency processes;
- gather information that supports understanding of a pupil's strengths, needs and home circumstances;
- review the impact of agreed strategies or support plans where this will benefit the pupil and family.

Home visits should always seek to strengthen partnership working, improve consistency between home and school, and remove barriers that may affect a pupil's safety, well-being, participation, attendance or educational outcomes.

Home visits must never be undertaken solely for administrative convenience, nor should they replace statutory responsibilities held by other agencies. Where safeguarding concerns indicate that immediate action is required, staff must follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant statutory procedures without delay.

Section 05

AUTHORISATION AND PLANNING

Planning carefully. Assessing need. Authorising appropriately.

All home visits must be authorised in advance by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Before authorisation is granted, there must be a clear rationale for the visit, an identified intended outcome and consideration of any known or potential risks.

Planning should consider:

- the purpose and expected outcomes of the visit;
- whether a home visit is the most appropriate and proportionate means of achieving those outcomes;
- known safeguarding information or previous concerns;
- any identified risks to staff or family members;
- the appropriate staff to attend;
- whether another agency should be involved or informed;
- any reasonable adjustments required to enable effective communication or engagement with the family;
- arrangements for recording the visit and any follow-up actions.

Where safeguarding concerns are known or emerging, the proposed visit must be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) before the visit takes place. Home visits must never delay safeguarding referrals or statutory action where a child may be at risk of significant harm.

Where appropriate, parents or carers should be informed in advance of the purpose of the visit, who will be attending and the expected duration of the visit. In exceptional circumstances, including safeguarding or welfare concerns, visits may be undertaken without prior notice where this is considered necessary and authorised by the DSL/DDSL or an appropriately authorised senior leader in accordance with school procedures.

Section 06

STAFFING & PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Ensuring competence. Maintaining boundaries. Acting professionally.

Home visits should normally be undertaken by staff whose role and experience are appropriate to the purpose of the visit. Consideration should be given to the knowledge, skills and relationships required to ensure that the visit is effective, supportive and professionally managed.

Where appropriate, visits should be undertaken by two members of staff. Decisions regarding single-person visits should be based on an individual risk assessment, taking account of the purpose of the visit, previous history, known risks and the experience of the member of staff.

Staff undertaking home visits are expected to:

- act professionally, respectfully and in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct at all times;
- demonstrate sensitivity to the family's culture, beliefs, values and individual circumstances;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries throughout the visit;
- communicate openly, honestly and respectfully with parents and carers;
- remain professionally curious and observant whilst avoiding assumptions or judgement;
- respect the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of all family members;
- follow all safeguarding procedures where concerns arise;
- accurately record the visit and any agreed actions as soon as practicable following the visit;
- report any concerns, risks or significant information to the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team or Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Staff should not:

- enter a property where they believe there is an unacceptable risk to their safety;
- place themselves in situations that compromise professional boundaries;
- accept gifts or hospitality that may influence, or appear to influence, professional judgement;
- transport pupils or family members unless specifically authorised in accordance with school procedures;
- make commitments or promises on behalf of the school that have not been agreed through appropriate decision-making processes.

Where interpreters or other professionals attend a visit, staff remain responsible for ensuring that professional standards, confidentiality and safeguarding expectations are maintained throughout.

Section 07

RISK ASSESSMENT AND STAFF SAFETY

Identifying risk. Protecting staff. Responding safely.

Riverside Bridge School recognises its duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and well-being of employees undertaking home visits. Appropriate planning, communication and risk assessment are therefore essential components of all home visiting activity.

A risk assessment must be completed before any visit where there are known or suspected risks to staff, pupils or family members. Risk assessments should be reviewed whenever new information becomes available or where circumstances have changed since a previous visit.

Risk assessments should consider, where appropriate:

- previous incidents or known risks associated with the address or individuals present;
- safeguarding concerns;
- known violence, aggression or threatening behaviour;
- environmental hazards, including access to the property and surrounding area;
- lone working arrangements;
- medical or welfare considerations;
- communication needs, including interpreter requirements;
- any additional measures required to ensure the safety of staff and family members.

Staff must ensure that the school is aware of:

- the address being visited;
- the purpose of the visit;
- the staff attending;
- the planned arrival and departure times;
- arrangements for confirming that the visit has concluded safely.

Where concerns arise during a visit that place staff or others at risk, staff should withdraw from the situation as soon as it is safe to do so and immediately inform the Senior Leadership Team, Designated Safeguarding Lead or emergency services, as appropriate.

Staff are not expected to place themselves at risk in order to complete a home visit. Where a visit cannot be completed safely, alternative arrangements should be considered and any safeguarding concerns managed through the appropriate statutory procedures.

Following any incident, near miss or significant concern arising from a home visit, an appropriate debrief should take place and the risk assessment reviewed before any further visits are undertaken.

Section 08

CONSENT AND COMMUNICATION

Explaining purpose. Respecting families. Supporting participation.

Riverside Bridge School is committed to developing open, respectful and collaborative relationships with parents and carers. Wherever possible, home visits should be planned in partnership with families, ensuring that the purpose of the visit, expected outcomes and roles of those attending are understood.

For the majority of home visits, parents or carers should be informed in advance and their agreement sought before the visit takes place. Information shared with families should include:

- the reason for the visit;
- the members of staff attending;
- the proposed date and approximate time;
- the intended purpose of the visit;
- any information or documentation the family may wish to have available.

There may be occasions where prior agreement is not appropriate or possible, including where there are immediate safeguarding concerns, welfare concerns or where an unannounced visit has been authorised by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Senior Leadership Team. In such circumstances, staff must ensure that the rationale for proceeding without prior agreement is clearly recorded.

During home visits, staff should:

- introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the visit;
- ensure that parents and carers understand the nature of any discussion taking place;
- communicate respectfully, using accessible language and interpreters where required;
- encourage families to share their views, strengths, concerns and aspirations;
- agree any actions or next steps wherever possible;
- explain how information from the visit will be recorded and used.

Information obtained during home visits must be managed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, the school's the school's Data Protection Policy, information-governance procedures and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Records should be factual, objective and proportionate, and only shared with those who have a legitimate professional need to know.

Section 09

SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES

Remaining curious. Recognising concern. Acting without delay.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of every member of staff. Home visits provide valuable opportunities to develop a fuller understanding of a pupil's lived experience and may enable staff to identify strengths, protective factors or concerns that are not apparent within the school environment.

All staff undertaking home visits must remain professionally curious, alert to indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation, domestic abuse, mental ill health, contextual safeguarding concerns or other factors that may place a child at risk of harm. During home visits, staff should remain professionally observant of information relevant to the pupil's safety and welfare, which may include:

- the pupil's presentation, wellbeing, communication and interaction;
- information shared by the pupil, parents, carers or others present;
- aspects of the home environment that are directly relevant to an identified safeguarding or welfare concern;
- indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation or domestic abuse;
- changes in circumstances that may affect the pupil's safety or wellbeing;
- protective factors and sources of support within the family;
- the pupil's views, wishes and lived experience where these can be ascertained appropriately; and
- significant changes from previous information that may increase or reduce concern.

Home visits undertaken by school staff are not social care assessments. Staff should observe and record matters relevant to their professional responsibilities without undertaking unnecessary inspection of the home or seeking information beyond the purpose of the visit.

Where safeguarding concerns are identified during or following a home visit, staff must act immediately in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Concerns must be reported without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), who will determine any further action, including referrals to Children's Social Care, the Police or other statutory agencies where appropriate.

Staff must not investigate safeguarding concerns themselves, provide assurances of confidentiality that cannot be maintained or delay reporting concerns whilst seeking additional information.

Where there is reason to believe that a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, staff must contact the emergency services where necessary and inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the earliest safe opportunity. Safeguarding information obtained during home visits must be recorded factually, objectively and promptly, with records uploaded to the school's safeguarding recording system in accordance with school procedures.

Section 10

RECORDING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND FOLLOW-UP

Recording accurately. Protecting information. Following through.

Accurate, timely and objective recording is an essential component of professional home visiting practice. A clear record ensures continuity of support, informs decision-making, evidences actions taken and contributes to the school's safeguarding and pastoral responsibilities.

Following every home visit, staff must complete an appropriate record as soon as practicable. Records should include:

- the date, time and location of the visit;
- the names and roles of those attending;
- the purpose of the visit;
- the key matters discussed;
- factual observations made during the visit;
- the views of parents, carers and, where appropriate, the pupil;
- any strengths, protective factors or concerns identified;
- agreed actions and responsibilities;
- any safeguarding concerns or referrals made;
- arrangements for follow-up or further support.

Records must be factual, objective and evidence-informed. Staff should clearly distinguish between observed facts, information shared by others and professional opinion. Personal opinions, assumptions or speculative comments must not be included within the official record.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, these must also be recorded immediately on the school's safeguarding recording system in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Information obtained during home visits is confidential and must only be shared with professionals who have a legitimate need to know in order to safeguard or support the pupil. All records must be managed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and the school's information governance procedures.

Home visits should conclude with clear follow-up arrangements where appropriate. These may include further contact with the family, referral to internal or external support services, multi-agency working, review of agreed actions or additional home visits where these continue to support the agreed outcomes.

The effectiveness of home visits should be reviewed as part of ongoing work with the family to ensure that support remains appropriate, proportionate and responsive to the changing needs of the pupil.

Section 11

TRAINING, SUPERVISION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Building competence. Supporting staff. Strengthening practice.

Riverside Bridge School is committed to ensuring that all staff undertaking home visits are appropriately trained, supported and supervised to carry out their responsibilities safely, confidently and professionally. Staff involved in home visiting will receive training appropriate to their role, which may include:

- safeguarding and child protection;
- professional curiosity;
- lone working and personal safety;
- risk assessment;
- confidentiality and information governance;
- effective communication and partnership working with families;
- de-escalation and conflict management where appropriate;
- recording and information sharing procedures.

Staff should have access to appropriate professional support before and after home visits, particularly where visits involve complex family circumstances, safeguarding concerns or emotionally challenging situations. Opportunities for reflection, debriefing and supervision should be provided where required to promote staff well-being and continuous professional development.

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor the implementation of this policy through the review of home visit records, safeguarding audits, supervision, professional discussions and evaluation of practice. Lessons learned from home visits, safeguarding reviews, complaints, incidents or near misses will be used to strengthen procedures, improve staff training and promote continuous improvement across the school. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains compliant with statutory guidance and continues to reflect best practice in safeguarding, family partnership and staff safety.

Section 12

OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Connecting policy. Clarifying process. Supporting consistency.

All home visits undertaken on behalf of Riverside Bridge School must follow the school's agreed Home Visiting Procedures and operational pathway.

These arrangements set out the practical requirements for authorisation, risk assessment, staffing, check-in and check-out procedures, recording, follow-up and escalation.

Operational procedures support consistent implementation of this policy but do not replace professional judgement, safeguarding responsibilities or statutory guidance. Where safeguarding or immediate safety concerns arise, these take precedence over routine procedural arrangements.

The pathway should be read alongside the procedural requirements set out within this policy and does not replace professional judgement, safeguarding responsibilities or statutory guidance.



Section 13

RELATED POLICIES & FRAMEWORKS

Connecting practice. Strengthening consistency.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Bridge for Families - Home Support Programme Policy
- Positive Support Policy
- Parent Partnership Policy
- Home-School Communication Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Home Visiting Procedures & Toolkit
- Early Help Procedures
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Working Together to Safeguard Children