The Meadows School

Home Visits & Lone Working Guidance

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

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1. 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

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.
- To develop and strengthen relationships with families for the best interests of the child.

2. Reasons for home visits:

Home visits are important in helping the school to contact new or hard to reach families. They are particularly useful as they enable the families 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 students and families 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/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 the family have not elicited a response and we have any welfare or safeguarding concerns for the student.
- To work with families 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 schoolwork at home e.g., following a fixed term 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).

- For home tutoring purposes, if this is deemed appropriate and safe to do so. In this event and appropriate workspace should be provided and a written work plan/contact should be agreed with the student and parent. This should include clear objectives, content, timing, duration of sessions, ground rules, child protection and confidentiality statements. There should also be an agreement that the parent or other suitable adult will remain in the home throughout the session. The members of staff teaching the student must be clearly visible to the parent and carer. If the parent or suitable adult is not at the home or has to leave the home during the tutoring session or is not adequately monitoring the teaching the tutor must end the session and leave.

The Pastoral team are responsible for ensuring written agreements and risk assessments are in place for offsite education at home. Written agreements and risk assessments must be reviewed before each visit and written amendments made BEFORE the visit takes place. Emergency situations should be reported to the police or social care and to the Headteacher

3. Benefits

Home visits have many benefits. A home visit gives the opportunity to parents/carers 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.

4. Procedures

The aim of the home visit policy procedure is to ensure good working practice and to provide guidelines in reducing risks to members of staff when undertaking home visits. The Meadows School recognises that there may be an increased risk to the health and safety of Visiting Staff e.g. DSL's, Pastoral Support Workers (DSL's/PSW) and any other staff when working alone. This guidance has been established to identify risks and manage them accordingly. The school has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees. Within this guidance, 'lone working' refers to situations where staff, in the course of their duties, work alone either in the school or in pupils' homes and are physically isolated from colleagues, possibly without immediate access to assistance

Under no circumstances should DSL's/PSW compromise their personal safety. If DSL's/PSW feels in danger, they should remove themselves from the situation

immediately. The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring suitable procedures are in place for undertaking risk assessments for all situations requiring lone working. These procedures must ensure that all involved are aware of precautions and methods of work to be followed, including emergency action to be taken if necessary. Once relevant tasks are identified, the following must be considered:

- **Risk of violence**: All jobs involving lone working are assessed for risk of verbal threats or violence

- **Access:** Some lone working may require access to locations that are difficult to access. Assessments will consider whether these tasks are suitable for lone working

- **Situational hazards**: These include potentially dangerous animals in the home, dangerous locations and visits to locations where previous problems have occurred.

SAFETY MEASURES BEFORE SETTING OUT ON A VISIT

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 Home Visit and/or Lone Working Risk Assessment ensuring this is always shared with the Safeguarding team and saved in the relevant location.
- Discuss with the Safeguarding Lead/Head Teacher 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.
- If required, arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you; home visits should be conducted in pairs. While this may not always be possible it should always be the first thought and best practice. 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, with or without the child.
- Wherever possible make an appointment to establish a time convenient to the family and to ensure that everyone you want to see will be present. Either make a phone call or send a letter. Refer to the 'Home Visits and Lone Working Risk Assessment' and inform the Safeguarding and Admin team of your intended location as well as estimated departure and arrival times before departing for a home visit.

- **Safe word:** To be agreed and recorded on the 'Home Visit and Lone Working Risk Assessment' as well as on the email sent to the DSL/Safeguarding/front desk.

During the Visit

- Park in a well-lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving.
- Dress appropriately.
- 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 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) or another responsible adult whom parents/carers have delegated to be there in their absence, and they have given us 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.
- Carry out a '10 second risk assessment' when you first arrive at the house. If you feel in danger, you should have an excuse ready not to enter the house and arrange an alternative appointment
- Be aware of any animals in the house and ask for them to be secured in a separate room. If there is a known problem with animals at the address, the occupants should be contacted and requested to remove or secure the animals before arrival.
- Not position themselves in the corner of a room or in a situation where it is difficult to escape.
- Remain calm and focused at all times and keep their possessions close to them
- Be aware of their body language and the body language of other adults. There is potentially a risk of exacerbating the situation by sending out nervous or aggressive signals, particularly where cultural, gender or physical issues need to be considered
- The DSL/PSW will report, via telephone, to the front office staff and the safeguarding team when the visit has been completed.
- 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 appropriate the 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 family that you will treat anything they tell you sensitively. Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting. Remember that under the 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 gossip about the school or staff. Do not stay too long. Keep to the point.
- Do not carry large sums of money or valuable items when making a home visit.
- Complete Home visit and Lone Working Risk Assessment to evidence visit and capture key information.

After the visit

- Report back to the school and record any visit minutes on Safeguard.
- If you are not returning directly to school, inform the school after the visit to say you have left the home visit.
- Any Child Protection concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with the DSL on arrival back to school.
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved with those particular children.

5. Home Visit and Lone Working Risk Assessment

Before any home visit is undertaken a thorough risk assessment needs to be completed by visiting staff. The risk assessment should include an evaluation of any known or potential factors regarding the student, parents/carers, or other people living in the household. Risk factors such as hostility, child protection concerns, complaints or grievances can make adults more vulnerable to an allegation and should be taken into consideration when completing the risk assessment. Specific consideration should be given to visits in relation to the risk associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, along with going outside of 'office hours' or in remote or secluded locations. Following an assessment, appropriate risk management measures should be in place before any visits are agreed.

Visiting staff should be clear about the purpose of the visit and include this in the home visit/Lone Working Risk Assessment. Visiting staff should be well informed about individual student profile and needs (e.g., behaviour plan, student risk assessments etc.) prior to each visit.

In conjunction with updating a risk assessment, visiting staff need to securely email the SLT, Safeguarding Team and Admin Team with the details of the persons whom they are visiting (including google map information) and a known contact number, as well as an estimate of how long they expect to be at these locations.

Please note that details of vehicles used by visiting staff, including make, model, registration number and colour, must be held by the main office. The main office need to also be aware of necessary contact details of visiting staff including next of kin.

Visiting staff (DSL/PSW, etc.) must notify the SLT, safeguarding team and front office staff of changes to their schedule. If a visit is deemed high risk, where there is a history of violence or the location itself is considered high risk, the visit must only be made if absolutely necessary. In these cases, the DSL/PSW may request a meeting in a more suitable location.

6. Attempt to contact the DSL/PSW if contact is not made as agreed.

Follow agreed escalation procedures and notify the Head Teacher/SLT/Lead DSL. Contingency arrangements must be in place for a member of staff to take over the role of front office staff in case they are unavailable, for example, the staff are called into a meeting or appointments go beyond their working day.

Where there is genuine concern, as a result of a lone worker failing to attend a visit or report back to the reception staff, the Head Teacher/SLT/Lead DSL will use the information held on record to try and ascertain the whereabouts of the DSL/PSW. If contact cannot be made, the Head Teacher/SLT/Lead DSL will decide, depending on the circumstances, whether to contact the police.

If police involvement is necessary, police will be given access to all information held.

In case of an emergency call the main office. When connected raise a concern by using the following phrase:

Hi , I'm at the home of (e.g., Adam Smith) and I need you to fetch the red folder so I can check a number.

It is the responsibility of the individual concerned to ensure all necessary precautions and procedures are adhered to at all times. Any person who becomes aware of circumstances involving lone working, where the existing control measures may not be fully effective, must inform the Head Teacher/SLT as soon as possible.

- ***Please refer to Appendix A for Home Visit and Lone working Risk Assessment template.***

7. 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.
  If working as a pair agree a code word (safe word) or phrase to alert your colleague that you need assistance or should leave.
- Staff must leave the property and reach a place of safety if you have any concerns about personal safety and inform school immediately.
- 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.
- It is strongly recommended that no one makes an evening home visit.

8. Training

Lone workers will be fully trained in safe working practices. The School Business Manager and the Head Teacher are responsible for organising all relevant training. The DSL/PSW will undertake training in conflict resolution to enable them to negotiate difficult situations safely. Other training that will be considered for DSL/PSW includes cultural awareness training, diversity and racial equality training, specific equipment training, manual handling training, first aid training, and training in disengagement techniques.

9. Duties of a lone worker

Lone workers are expected to follow all the procedures outlined in this guidance and all relevant training as per needs. Failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence. Lone workers need to carry out dynamic risk assessments at all times.

10. Child protection and safeguarding

Physical restraint and use of force: Our policy on physical intervention by staff is set out in our Behaviour Policy and acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person. We understand that physical

intervention of a nature which causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under child protection or disciplinary procedures.

11. **One-to-one sessions (on-site and offsite**); If lone working is an integral part of an employee's role, a full and appropriate risk assessment will be conducted at all times as per needs. Full and ongoing training regarding child protection, physical restraint and the use of reasonable force, and lone working procedures will be provided for all staff with regular lone working responsibilities. Meetings or sessions with children will never be held in remote or secluded areas (unless the child is undergoing a therapy/intervention session with staff, due to the confidentiality of these sessions). Colleagues will be informed beforehand when holding one-to-one sessions or discussions. The use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs is not advised however under certain circumstances interruptions may disrupt the effectiveness of interventions; such interventions will take place where doors have viewing panels and windows. Doors will be kept open when conducting one-to-one sessions. Where this is not possible, it will be ensured that both parties can be seen through one or more windows. When holding one-to-one sessions, staff members will talk to the child with a desk between them, or otherwise arrange the room or environment to avoid unnecessary physical contact. Both parties will sit near to the door. If a child becomes emotional, distressed, or angry, the staff member will seek assistance, it will be reported to SLT/Lead DSL and a record kept of the employee's concerns.

12. Allegations:

Procedures for dealing with allegations against staff can be found in our Allegations against Staff policy.