



Learning and Growing Together, Hand in Hand

Home Visits Guidance & Policy

Written: January 2015

Next Review: January 2018

MRS C M STURMEY

Policy confirmed by the Governing Body of Grace Mary Primary School on:

Date: _____

Head Teacher Signature: _____

Chair of Governors Signature _____

GRACE MARY PRIMARY SCHOOL – HOME VISITS GUIDANCE & INFORMATION 2015

Home visits play a vital role in providing services to children and their families. Most home visits will be conducted in conjunction with the family although some visits may be undertaken without their prior knowledge if specific actions are required to safeguard children or vulnerable adults.

In all cases where practitioners are visiting the family home, there is a responsibility to be alert to any concerns that may arise about the welfare of children or adults in the home and to take action appropriately. This document contains an information-gathering tool to support practitioners undertaking a home visit to identify any risks that may require further action.

Undertaking a home visit

Home visits provide opportunities to build relationships with children and their families. It must be remembered that anyone undertaking a home visit is a representative of the school and must behave in a professional and courteous manner.

We will undertake a home visit to make contact with a family who have expressed an interest in their child attending Grace Mary primary School. We are there to:

1. provide information about our service
2. gather information about the child and family e.g. child's needs, likes, dislikes and routines
3. plan for the child's introduction to our setting.

At the very least, a home visit provides an important opportunity for the school to make an observational check of the living conditions of the home that the children are residing in and identify whether these may be having an impact on the parenting of the child(ren's). As a school will then be able to use the information gathered during the visit to liaise with other agencies, as required, to ensure the children and their family receive the right support at the right time.

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It is important to understand the purpose of the home visit to ensure that they are as purposeful, efficient and effective as possible. The first questions to ask are:

1. What is the purpose of the visit?
2. Has the visit been planned with the family or is it unannounced?
3. Who are you expecting to see during the visit?
4. What are you intending to achieve?
5. What is your contingency plan if the visit is not completed?

Personal Safety

There is a duty on the person undertaking the home visit to take the necessary steps to ensure their own personal safety in line with school protocols.

Safety rules for Grace Mary staff undertaking a home visit are:

1. NO lone home visits – 2
2. To inform & keeping the Office manager (office staff in her absence) up to date during visits:-
 - a) when the visit is taking place and how long it is likely to take
 - b) inform office of time leaving school
 - c) leave office with itinerary – names & addresses with order if doing multiple visits
 - d) School office to call at a specified time to check that all is ok on the home visit
 - e) To call the school office to inform them when the visit has concluded
 - f)
3. To have a charged mobile phone in working order should you need to communicate with someone during the visit

4. To have a contingency plan if the member of staff does not return at the allotted time or cannot be contacted.

No contact after 5 attempts

- I. Use text messaging at the same time.
- II. Phone the house landline
- III. Still no contact: phone parents mobile numbers
- IV. Still no contact: school to contact the Tividale Neighbourhood Police Officers to do a check on property. (contact details on wall in school office)

Before the visit

Where possible, it is good practice to review any existing information about the family and other professionals involved to help form a decision about any possible risks that the worker may encounter in the location that is being visited.

The following points may be useful when planning the visit:

1. Are there known risks to workers and from whom?
2. Can you communicate with the key family members? Consider the need for taking someone to help interpret. It is not appropriate to use any children to undertake this role.
3. Ensure that you have any information to share in a language that is appropriate for the individual needs of the family.
4. Ensure that your dress code is appropriate and shows respect to the families culture or values.
5. Speak to the client about arranging a home visit. Consider asking the family if they mind a “drop in” visit as you are passing as a more realistic impression of the family and home conditions will be ascertained rather than by a visit by appointment.
6. Explain that home visits are a standard procedure for the school in introducing themselves and allowing the child and family to become familiar with key professionals they will be in contact with in the school.

7. Let the family know that you would like to visit when the whole family and anyone else who lives in the house is present to see the child in comfortable surroundings where they will be at ease with a visitor but also to allow the family to ask for any additional support to meet their and their child's needs if they feel it appropriate.
8. Let the family know the objectives of the visit and how they feel about them. Giving them the opportunity to let you know if they are uncomfortable about any of the proposals will help a line of communication to alleviate any of their concerns.
9. If possible, ascertain who currently lives in the house and if they have any animals so that a risk assessment can be undertaken if required. Set the time and date for the visit if it is not going to be a "drop-in".
10. If the home visit has to be cancelled how will the family be informed?
11. If a home visit is refused, or no one is present at an arranged appointment time, discuss any implications with the Designated Safeguarding Lead so that a contingency plan can be arranged or further actions taken.

During The Visit

1. Ensure you have identification on you detailing who you are and where you work. Encourage the family to check the ID.
2. On arrival check your gut instinct. Do you feel welcome and safe? Are there any pets that may pose a risk? Consider asking the family to remove any to a separate room. Assess whether it is appropriate to be there.
3. If at any stage the family do not want you to remain in their property, remember you are there at their consent and they can ask you to leave at anytime. There is no legal obligation on the family to share information with you during the visit.
4. Maintain your professional boundaries at all times and ensure that you follow your staff code of conduct. Do not drink alcohol or smoke with them or accept any gifts.
5. Do not discuss any information about other families that you are working with unless you have consent to do so. For more information consult the document [Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners and Managers](#)

6. Follow school safeguarding policies at all times and ensure that you act on any concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult e.g. children at home on their own or in the care of inappropriate carers, home conditions posing an immediate risk/risk of significant harm to a child, children under 1 year old with bruising. This is not an exhaustive list. Ensure that you have appropriate numbers with you should you need to call for advice.
7. At the end of the visit, ensure that the family are aware of any intended actions and that their wishes and feelings are included. Make sure the family are clear about:
 - a. Any plans made
 - b. Next steps and who will undertake and actions
 - c. The date and time of the next visit, if required.
 - d. Any information that will be shared, and with whom, seeking consent if required. The only exception is if you believe the child is at immediate risk and a child protection referral is required and sharing your concerns with the family may place a child/vulnerable adult at risk or compromise and enquiries that need to be undertaken by investigation agencies.

Following the Home Visit

If you have any concerns about the immediate risk to a child seek advice immediately on leaving the property from either:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead or, in their absence;
- Children's Social Care
- Emergency services in the case of immediate risk

If the home visit was unsuccessful consider the following points:

- When must the home visit be completed by?
- What time should it occur?
- If no one is present is a return visit required and by when?
- What is the plan B if the home visit is unsuccessful?

Ensure that the outcome of the visit, including any actions to be undertaken, and a copy of the checklist, is recorded as soon as practicable in line with your agencies record keeping guidelines.

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Home Visit Record

Date completed		Completed by	
		Contact no	
Details (for unborn baby, infant, child or young person)			
Name of child/young person		Name/DOB parent/carer Contact number	
Date of Birth or EDD		Relationship to child	
		Gender	M ☐ F ☐
Home address, include any others frequented		First language child/young person	
		First Language parent/carer	

Home Environment

	Yes	No
Was the appointment kept and access to the home allowed? (Include any reasons given if not)		
	Strengths	Support Required
How safe is the home environment for children? E.g. Overcrowding, unguarded fires/staircases, access to inappropriate items (sharp objects, matches/lighters etc), evidence of substance misuse, housing quality (signs of damp/mould or other building deterioration). This list is not exhaustive		
Is the home unclean to a level that poses a risk to a child's health/well-being? E.g. blocked access routes, evidence of soiled nappies/un-emptied potty's, evidence of animal/human faeces/urine, signs of excessive smoking/smoky environment, un-cleaned baby materials e.g. bottles/bowls, remains of food/mould on plates and work-surfaces, pest infestations? This list is not exhaustive		

Other Occupants/Visitors to the Property

	Name/DOB (if possible)
Permanent residents (include adults and children)	
Other adults present during visit or who frequent the property? Include relationship to child	
Other children present during visit or who frequent the property? Include relationship to child	

Interaction With Children

	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Support Required</u>
Do the adults conduct themselves in an appropriate manner? E.g. use of poor language, aggression to children or visitors, making threats, rough handling, do other adults act appropriately to any concerns observed		
Do adults interact with the children or respond to their needs in an appropriate manner?		

Child's Presentation

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Child present during the visit? Record reasons for absence		
	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Support Required</u>
Is the child appropriately dressed for their age, time of year, activity?		
Is there evidence of regular nappy change, if appropriate? Is there evidence that any soiling in older children has been addressed?		
Does the child appear under/over weight? Is there evidence that the child is receiving appropriate levels of food/drink?		
Does the child appear unkempt?		
What was the child doing during the home visit?		
What was the demeanour of the child		

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during the home visit?		
How does the child interact with others in the household (adults and children)?		
How does the child interact with the other adults and vice versa?		
If age appropriate does the child talk?		
Are there toys in the home?		

Outcome of Home Visit

Discussion with DSL		Date of discussion
Can you provide the additional support needed? ☐ Yes – provide service, monitor and review via internal meeting ☐ No complete an early help assessment, with consent ☐ CP referral required. Contact Social Care immediately and complete Referral Form ☐ COG referral required		Summary of Key Outcomes:
Referral to	Date	

This information will be shared with other agencies, please ensure it is understood and signed by the parent/carer. In certain circumstances this can be the young person themselves

All data will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998. Information recorded on this form will be used to support decisions about appropriate service support. This may include practitioners from various services in a multi agency meeting. By ticking the box, I confirm that how and with whom information is to be shared has been explained to me. ☐

Completed by:	Agency:	Signature:
Name of parent/carer:	Signature:	