

Meole Brace CE Primary School and Nursery

HOME VISITS POLICY

This policy is designed to protect the safety of all school staff carrying out home visits. Where home visits take place a risk assessment should be completed in advance, this will identify any concerns about potential risks and appropriate measures to be taken.

Nursery home visits will always take place with staff in pairs.
Home visits can only take place when the policy and protocols are fully met.
Policy and procedures must be consistently applied.

Meeting each child in his or her home environment has proved invaluable in

- gathering information that will enable the children to settle into Nursery
- establishing positive links with families, especially those of vulnerable pupils

For parents and children, a visit gives them the opportunity to meet the teacher and staff in a safe environment, where they feel confident and at ease.

For teachers and support staff, a visit provides the opportunity to:

- establish early, positive contact
- see children in their own familiar settings
- meet other family members, people and pets who are important to the children
- understand the problems that children might encounter at school, and also to appreciate the wealth of learning that goes on in the home.

This all helps to get a fuller picture of the children. Professionals can gain much from observing a child where he or she feels settled and in control.

Nursery home visits

The Nursery teacher and a Teaching Assistant make each visit together. As well as the obvious safety implications, this allows one to talk to the child's parents and the other to focus solely on the child. This can be the beginning of the relationship between the teacher and the child, especially as staff have been invited into the child's home. It also means that the parent has focused time with the Teacher or Teaching Assistant.

Thirty minutes is the standard period of time devoted to each home visit. Visits take place during the term before children are due to start attending Nursery sessions. Parents are always telephoned in advance to confirm the appointment.

All visits need careful structuring and prepared resources.

Visiting staff members will take an information pack with them when visiting a pupil and their parents in their home. This would usually contain photographs of staff and the kinds of activities the children will be doing inside and outside of the school, crayons, paper and story book along with the standard forms that would need to be filled in by the parents. Either the teacher or the Teaching Assistant will read stories to the child and the other adult will engage with the parent/carer.

Visits to pupils or families at home may be carried out by other members of staff e.g. Pupil Support Assistant (PSA). In these cases careful consideration should be made as to whether it is appropriate for the PSA to visit unaccompanied. It may be that strong links have already been established with the family and there is minimum or no risk. However, all procedures and protocol should nevertheless be carried out before the visit takes place.

There is a unanimous feeling in our school that the home visits which staff undertake have huge benefits.

The insights that staff have gained into each child's home and background greatly helps them to assess their level of need in school and, in the case of nursery visits, prepare for the child's entry into the setting. Another major benefit is that the home visits are the start or the continued building of the relationship with parents which is vital if we are to be successful in providing for the needs of the child. It also shows parents that the school respects them and wants to share their knowledge, which puts the relationship on a more equal footing.

Guidelines for Staff.

Working in Partnership with Parents/Carers

- Show respect for Parents/Carers as equal partners.
- Be a good listener.
- Make appointments in advance and offer alternative dates/times.
- Ensure that parents know when you will arrive, how long you will stay, what will happen, what kinds of questions you will be asking and what information you will bring.
- Ask them to think about the information they need from you in advance of the meeting.
- Accept the right of a family not to want a home visit.
- Confirm Parents/Carers actual name and title and keep on record. Do not presume that there are two parents with the same surname as the child.
- Do not assume that all Parents/Carers are literate.
- Make sure you consider diversity of social, cultural, racial, religious and sexual orientation.

Specific Protocols for All Home Visits

Risk Assessment

- Check records to see what is known and information available.
- Talk to other professionals who may already have had contact or involvement with the family.
- Obtain information about the location of the home visit. For example, does the area have a reputation for being unsafe, isolated or poorly lit?
- Discuss strategies to adopt when working with a potentially challenging Parent/Carer/Family with your line manager.
- Where potential risks are identified arrange an alternative meeting environment

ALWAYS COMPLETE THE RISK ASSESSMENT BEFORE A VISIT TAKES PLACE - Appendix*

Health and Safety

- Inform a nominated member of staff when you are leaving for a home visit.
- Complete the **visit proforma*** outlining details of the visit, including family name, child's name, address, telephone number, purpose of visit, time of appointment and time due back at base.
- You must inform the nominated person if there is a cancellation or alteration to the time.
- Carry with you and show the parent some form of identification
- Demonstrate normal courtesy - wait to be invited into the home.
- If a child answers the door, ask if an adult is present in the house before entering. **Do not** enter if an adult is not present.
- If the Parent/Carer appears at all uncomfortable about the visit continuing, staff should offer to leave, offer to continue the contact with a telephone call and give the Parent/Carer the telephone number of the Nursery
- Use common sense, trust your instincts and if a situation feels dangerous or threatening - leave, saying for example that you need to get something from your car.
- All Home Visits must finish by 16.30.
- Contact the nominated person immediately after the visit is finished informing them that you are safe.

The nominated person must advise the Head Teacher if staff carrying out a home visit has not made contact by the appointed time and **locally agreed actions must be followed***.

Policy Written February 2014

Review Date