



Home Visits Policy

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1. Procedure Overview

1.1 Overarching Principles

The aims of this document are:

- To set out guidance to Windmill Federation staff when making official visits to the homes of pupils and their families
- To ensure the personal safety of staff on home visits

1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The procedures in this document are to be read and implemented by all staff and governors of the Windmill Federation.

2. Procedures Before, During and After a Home Visit

Reasons why the school might conduct a home visit (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Transitional visit
- Attendance visit
- Welfare concerns
- Professional meeting

2.1 Prior to the home visit:

- Appropriate information should be gathered by the school (name of parents/carers, address, contact details, name of any other adults residing in the home)
- If this is the first visit to the home, the risk assessment checklist must be completed (Appendix 2) If previous visits have been conducted, then a full risk assessment should have been completed and be available for review (Appendix 4)
- Where possible, agree a date / time / agenda with the person/s that you are intending to meet.
- Staff are able to request that animals are not present in the room during the home visit.
- Develop a plan between those staff who are attending - what is going to be discussed, how this is going to be delivered and what you would like to be achieved.
- Driver/s are to provide the necessary documents to the school office – driving license (both parts may be required, depending on date of issue), MOT certificate and insurance certificate, evidencing that there is the appropriate business insurance cover for the vehicle being used to transport staff to and from the visit.
- Where advice is communicated from any source which suggests caution or a reason not to conduct a home visit, then this advice must be given full consideration. All initial home visits should be conducted by at least 2 members of staff.
- Ensure the number of a “buddy”, i.e. a member of staff based at school who is accessible and available throughout the full duration of the visit, is stored into your telephone and agree a code word to indicate you are in trouble and need help i.e. “Can you tell Mr. Jones I will be late for his appointment today?”

- Before staff leave to go on a home visit they must inform the school office, and leave the following information recorded in the Home Visits Log (Appendix 3):
 - Date of visit, and the time leaving school
 - Your car registration number
 - Mobile phone numbers of the staff conducting the home visit
 - The address of the home visit and whom you are expecting to see
 - The time you are expected to arrive and leave the property, and the time you are expected to return to school
 - The safety of school staff is very important. Staff should not take risks. If they feel insecure, they should not go on a home visit. It is the staff's responsibility to voice their concerns to their line manager.

2.2 During the home visit:

- Two members of staff will attend every initial home visit, and two members of staff must attend any home visit deemed to pose an increased risk.
- Staff must wear named photo ID.
- Remember you are a guest in someone's home: show respect and courtesy at all times.
- If staff are asked any questions they cannot answer, they will either find out and report back to the parent/carer or refer the parent or carer to a senior member of staff.
- If the situation starts to become unmanageable (i.e. verbal or physical aggression) staff should call the meeting to an end and leave the property. If you are unable to do this safely without aggravating the situation, call your buddy using the code word to summon help. In this case the buddy should make a 999 call to the police.
- Consider personal safety at all times during the visit; do not put yourself in danger (see expectations for behaviour)

2.3 For Transition visits:

- Transition visits for young children coming into school for the first time are to help the child and family feel confident.
- Staff should speak with the child to reassure them about school and to get to know them, discussing routines and expectations for school.
- Staff must gather and record views from parents and carers about school readiness, strengths and concerns (Appendix 1).
- Staff must take a welcome admissions pack, pictures of the staff and setting.
- Staff should organise visits to the setting at the home visit to continue transition.

2.4 If you arrive for a home visit and no one is home:

- Leave a note with the date and time you were there, the school phone number and a time that you can be reached to set up a new appointment.
- Return to the school and try to call the parent. If you are unable to locate them at that time, send a note home with the child the next school day, asking the parent to contact you for a time the visit could be rescheduled.
- It is the responsibility of the staff due to visit to ensure that parents are contacted immediately if they are unable to keep to the scheduled appointment.
- If the home visitor cancels a home visit, due to illness or otherwise, it must be reconvened at a later date.

2.5 Where there are welfare concerns:

- If there is no eye sight on a child when this is expected and there are concerns about safety, then the staff should contact the DSL who will inform the social worker or family support practitioner.
- If there is sufficient concern that a child is at immediate risk, staff should call the police on 999 for a welfare check and inform DSL.

2.6 In the event of an incident:

- If there is an incident while at the home address, staff should assess the situation and make a decision on the best course of action to keep themselves safe (see Appendix1 for tips) Depending on the nature of the incident it may be necessary for staff to contact their buddy to get help or contact the emergency services on 999 or 101.
- On return to the office after an incident, the staff member must contact their line manager, inform them of the incident and complete an incident report form, making sure that the incident is factually recorded. All incident report forms must be shared with the Executive Headteacher by the end of the working day.

2.7 After the home visit:

- If the staff member/s do not return to school within the allotted time, and have not contacted the school to tell them why they are going to be late, then the allocated buddy must make all reasonable attempts to contact each staff member. If contact cannot be established, a senior leader must be informed immediately and consideration must be given to contacting the police.
- A senior leader will take the following steps, as required, in the event of staff not returning: attempt to contact the family via a landline and speak to visiting staff, drive past the property to check if the vehicle is there, look for signs of an incident, and/or contact the police to report the individuals missing.
- A full risk assessment should also be completed following the first visit, and if necessary updated after each subsequent visit, which will form the basis of any further home visits that are required. The risk assessment must be signed off by a member of the senior leadership team. After every visit, the relevant school paperwork to document the visit should be completed, and any follow up actions undertaken.
- A record of all home visits should be kept and stored in a secure location, in line with the recording system designated by the school. Where applicable, a copy of this record should be placed on the child's safeguarding profile.

2.8 Lone visits

There may be times when it is acceptable for one member of staff to complete a subsequent home visit on their own, for example:

- Following the completion of a full risk assessment and a home visit has been deemed to be of low risk and it is agreed that one person can visit the home (repeat visits, etc.)
- Other professional/s is/are attending the house at the same time as the visit has been jointly coordinated in such cases, all of the guidance above still applies, in order to keep the staff member safe.

2.9 Staff Behaviour

- Remain professional at all times
- Be a good listener
- Have specific goals or objectives for each visit
- Realise the limitations of your role
- Help parents become more independent
- Keep language appropriate
- Be yourself
- Be confident
- Respect cultural and ethnic values
- Monitor your own behaviour; the parent is observing you

2.10 Personal Safety during a Home Visit:

- Keep your car keys and mobile phone in a pocket or on your person; in case of an emergency, you need to be able to exit and/or call for help quickly.
- Survey the premises for exits and ways out in an emergency.
- If the person you are visiting locks the front door, ask them to leave the key in the lock.
- Be wary of trip hazards that are both external and internal, such as steps, lifted floor coverings, electrical wires.
- If there are dogs or other pets which concern you, ask that they be put away in a locked kennel or room.
- Limit the amount of cash you carry.
- Dress appropriately for the purpose of your visit.

2.11 Travel Safety tips when Conducting a Home Visit:

- Lock your car doors as soon as you enter your car.
- If parking in a private driveway, reverse park if you are able to do so, so that you can simply drive out.
- In a cul-de-sac, park in the direction of the cul-de-sac exit.
- Approach your car with your keys easily available or in your hand.
- Check the car interior before entering.
- Hide any bags or personal/work items so that they are not viewable.
- Avoid parking beside vans/trucks.
- Park in well-lit areas and avoid parking in isolated areas.

2.12 Tips to consider if you are faced with aggression during a home visit:

- Never enter a house if there are raised voices or signs of aggression coming from within – call the police.
- Don't enter a home with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Don't enter a home with someone who is inappropriately dressed.
- If an aggressive incident occurs, remember to remain as calm as possible, and speak slowly and calmly.
- Stay in communal and neutral rooms such as a living room; avoid moving into bedrooms or kitchens.
- Keep space between yourself and the aggressor, and try to keep a barrier (e.g. table) between you where possible.
- Slowly move towards an exit, or to a room you can barricade yourself in.
- Try not to walk backwards as you risk tripping over.
- At the earliest opportunity call the Police, and call your buddy to report the incident.

Appendix 1 - School Readiness questions for a home visit
(Adjust to meet age range 2-5 yrs.)

Question	Parental Comments	Further Consideration Needed?
What are their strengths and what are they interested in?		
Is your child used to socialising away from the home?		
Can your child speak using 3 or 4 word phrases?		
Do you speak dual languages at home?		
Can they manage clothes and shoes off/on?		
Does your child brush their own teeth twice a day?		
Can they use the loo and wash hands?		
Do they eat a range of healthy foods? Use a knife/fork?		
Does your child have good sleep patterns?		
Do they enjoy books? Which books?		
Have they used pens, pencils, paint, scissors?		
Can they recognise their name or write letters?		
Can they listen to a longer story picture book?		
Can they wait patiently for their age and take turns?		
Are you concerned about their development in any way?		
Do they have any identified special needs or outside agencies supporting them or you?		

Appendix 2 – Initial Risk Assessment

Initial Home Visit Risk Assessment

Family Name:	Address:	Contact Details:
Date Completed:	By Whom:	

	Yes	No
Is anyone in the household known for violent offences?		
Is anyone in the household known to misuse drugs or alcohol?		
Have any risks been identified by any other agencies?		
Are there any pets in the household?		
Are they threatening?		
Are you aware of any intimidating/threatening clients, relatives or friends living at or likely to visit the property?		
Are there any dangers/hazards associated with the property?		
Do you think contact should be made outside of the home?		

Are you confident all safety measures are in place?

Areas of concern – if you have answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide further details

Level of Risk – <i>without control measures in place</i> High / Medium / Low Control measures in place to reduce risk		
Level of risk – <i>with control measures in place</i> High/ Medium / Low		
Date	Senior Leader – Print	Senior Leader – Sign

Appendix 3 – Home Visit Log

Home Visits Log

[illegible]

Appendix 4 – Home Visit Risk Assessment

Academy					Completed By:				Date:		
Activity -					Executive Headteacher:				Review Date:		
Hazard		Initial Risk					Action Plan		Residual Risk		
Details of hazard	Who is affected and how?	Risk			What controls are already in place	Further action required	By whom	By when	Risk		
		L	M	H					L	M	H

Review annually, or after an incident, or if there are changes to the task, environment, equipment or the people affected.				
Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	Review 4	Review 5
Date & Initial	Date & Initial	Date & Initial	Date & Initial	Date & Initial

The level of risk is calculated by: The likelihood x The Consequence

- 1 - Insignificant (no injury)
- 2 - Minor (minor injury needing first aid)
- 3 - Moderate (up to 3 days' absence)
- 4 - Major (more than 3 days' absence)
- 5 - Catastrophic (death)

Risk rating:

- 1 - Very unlikely
- 2 - Unlikely
- 3 - Fairly likely
- 4 - Likely
- 5 - Very likely

1 – 4 Low (*acceptable*) *No further action required*

5 – 9 Medium (*adequate*) *If risk cannot be lowered any further, consider risk against benefit. Monitor and look to improve at next review*

10 – 16 High (*tolerable*) *Identify further control measures to reduce risk rating. Seek further advice e.g. line manager, H&S team, etc.*

17 - 25 Very High (*unacceptable*) *Do not undertake the activity. Implement immediate improvement.*