

Home Visits Policy

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Revision History:

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes:
1.0	May 2024	Gary Aldred	New policy

Home Visits Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. A home visit involves school staff visiting the home of a parent/carer. The goal of a home visit is to build and enhance partnerships with parents/carers and staff, providing focused support that serves a pupil's best interests.
- 1.2. While interactions with pupils and their parents/carers are generally held at school, there may be times, due to urgent or specific circumstances, when a home visit is necessary, either as a one-time or recurring event.
- 1.3. The roles of some staff, including family support workers and child-centred support staff, sometimes require them to undertake home visits.
- 1.4. A list of reasons for home visits can be found in [Appendix A](#).

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy is effective for all schools within The Mead Educational Trust, the Teaching School, the SCITT and all other activities under the control of the Trust and reporting to the Trust Board.
- 2.2. This policy is to be used for home visits with pupils and or parents/carers.

3. Purpose

- 3.1. This policy aims to clearly define expectations for staff and families regarding the conduct of home visits and to provide guidance on reducing risks to staff during these visits.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. Home Visit - 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.
- 4.2. Doorstop Visit - A visit that does not require members of staff to enter the home of a parent, carer or guardian. Door stop visits can be conducted by one member of staff, but they must not enter the home.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for home visits are as follows:

- 5.1. Executive Team:
 - Formal approval of Home Visits Policy
- 5.2. Principal:
 - Oversight and implementation of the Home Visits Policy within their school.

- Review and process home visit requests for senior leaders and other staff.
- Ensure that staff undertaking home visits have read and understood this policy.
- Ensure suitable home visits risk assessment is in place for school.

5.3. Designated Safeguarding Lead and Senior Leaders:

- Review and process home visit requests for staff as appropriate.
- Adhere to the Home Visits Policy, especially in relation to safe phrases.

5.4. Staff members conducting home visits:

- Adhere to the Home Visits Policy
- Avoid situations that may risk their personal safety.

5.5. Office staff and line managers

- Adhere to the Home Visits Policy in relation to monitoring whereabouts of staff members conducting home visits i.e. arrival times, safe phrases (staff should display the poster found in [Appendix C](#) within the school office).

5.6. All staff

- Be aware of home visit safe phrase.

6. Related documents

- 6.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the TMET Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and TMET Health and Safety Policy.

7. Home visits

7.1. Briefing and support

Before undertaking home visits, school senior leaders (such as senior attendance champion or designated safeguarding leads) should ensure staff involved in home visits (including office-based staff) have read and understand the Home Visits Policy.

Staff undertaking home visits should be coached in safe practices to adhere to such as keeping visual access and/or an open door in one-to-one situations and positioning themselves strategically in a room to give them a direct exit route, keeping professional boundaries in place. In addition, depending on the purpose of the visit, school senior leaders should ensure staff undertaking home visits have received relevant briefings such as cultural awareness, diversity and racial equality, first aid, handling difficult conversations, de-escalation techniques and training in disengagement techniques etc.

7.2. Personal safety

It is the responsibility of staff to always keep themselves safe. They must avoid any situations that may risk their safety.

If you are concerned about your safety, do not conduct the home visit.

7.3. Authorising Home Visits

All home visits conducted by staff **must** be authorised by the principal or other senior leaders.

Senior leaders may conduct home visits without the authorisation of the principal but **must** keep the principal informed of their whereabouts and the outcome of any visit made.

Home visits **should not** be made outside of school hours unless it is deemed an emergency and authorised by the principal.

7.4. Preparing for home visits

Prior to undertaking home visits, staff must:

- Read and be familiar with the Home Visit Policy.
- Seek authorisation for home visit from either Principal or Senior Leader (as per 7.3)
- Wherever possible, parents/carers should be informed of the home visit prior to arrival. Understandably, there will be exceptions to this; for example, where a home visit is required to confirm that an absent child is at home when parents/carers are not responding to attempted contact or emergency safeguarding visits.
- Be clear with yourself about the purpose of the visit and any additional context or background information.
- Discuss with the Safeguarding team 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 two people are carrying out the visit, clarify each person's role from the outset. (In some circumstances, a member of school staff may accompany a social worker visit).
- Consider who you need to see, e.g. one or both parents/carers, with or without the pupil.
- Consider the intention of the visit and the desired outcome. For attendance visits, consider strategies and options available to promote improved attendance. For example, leaving a 'calling card' if there is no one at home.
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances.
- 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 email/letter in advance wherever possible.
- Refer to your school's Home Visits Risk Assessment and inform office staff and your line manager of your intended location before departing for a home visit and, if you are returning to school, your anticipated time of return.
- Begin to prepare Home Visits Form ([Appendix B](#))

7.5. Conducting home visits

When undertaking home visits, staff must:

- Park in well-lit areas with easily accessible exits that don't require reversing.
- Before entering a property, ensure your mobile phone is on and personal or sensitive items are secured.
- Dress appropriately and avoid carrying large sums of money or valuable personal items.
- Be aware of your surroundings, including any pets.
- Be respectful of people's homes and family cultures and practices, for example removing shoes when entering or avoiding days or times which clash with religious or cultural events.
- Maintain professionalism by providing advice rather than personal opinions. Keep conversations neutral, discreet, and focused, avoiding personal or derogatory remarks about colleagues or the school. Keep visits brief and to the point.
- Introduce yourself, show identification, and clearly state the visit's purpose. Typically, discuss pupil absences at the property's threshold with a parent/carer (doorstop visit), and enter homes only when invited by a responsible adult.
- Speak only to parents/carers or designated responsible adults (as per pupil's BromCom profile or through email exchange prior to the visit). Avoid discussing the visit's purpose with siblings or other unrelated individuals and do not enter children's bedrooms or go upstairs unless necessary and accompanied by a responsible adult.
- Schedule follow up meetings at the school.
- Assure parents/carers that anything they tell you will be handled sensitively but clarify that necessary information will be disclosed under safeguarding protocols. Remember that under safeguarding procedures, you must report disclosures or suspicions to the designated safeguarding team.
- If you suspect a child is alone, unsupervised, or in danger, immediately contact the school's Designated Safeguarding Team to address your concerns. They may refer the case to social care if needed.
- If a staff member doesn't return to school as expected, school staff must attempt contact by phone, and escalate to a senior leader if needed.

7.6. Action to take if you feel threatened, in danger or unsafe.

- **If, at any point, you feel yourself or anyone within the household is in immediate danger contact 999. Then inform the principal and school designated safeguarding lead.**
- If threatened or prevented from leaving, remain calm, appear confident, and speak slowly and clearly. Avoid engaging in arguments and mention that you will consult a senior staff member for guidance.
- Maintain distance and avoid physical contact or turning your back on an angry individual.
- **If you feel unsafe, leave the property immediately, find a safe location, and inform the school right away.**
- To alert a colleague with you that you feel unsafe, use the **safe phrase "I need to call school and let them know I need cover for my duty."**

- To alert school that you are on a home visit and feel unsafe and need support, call the school and use the **safe phrase, “I am on a home visit, and I need cover for my duty”**. Upon hearing this, staff must advise the principal or most senior member of staff available who will then request police assistance.

7.7. Follow-on actions after home visits

- After safely exiting the property, inform the school office of your safety and next onward location if you are not returning straight to school.
- Staff must write a short report on the visit and upload to the pupil’s file within 24 hours of the visit ([Appendix B](#)). Risk assessments should be updated based on the visit's findings.
- Report any safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, logging them in CPOMs for documentation.
- If aggressive or abusive behaviour occurred, refrain from scheduling further visits until the situation is reviewed with SLT.
- Maintain confidentiality; only discuss visit details with staff directly involved with the child or family.

8. **Child Protection and Safeguarding**

- Any safeguarding concerns identified must be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.
- Any allegations made against a member of staff making a home visit must be dealt with in accordance with TMET’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Guidelines.

Appendix A: Reasons for home visits

Home visits may be used:

- When pupils are refusing to come into school
- When there are attendance issues/concerns
- When pupils are being educated at home
- When all other means of contact with a family has failed
- When it is in the best interest of the child to have a discussion with parents/carers about an issue 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 parents/carers have not elicited a response and we have any welfare or safeguarding concerns for the pupil.
- To work with and support parents/carers in developing strategies to help their child attend school where attendance is an issue.
- 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).

Appendix B

**Home Visit Form
SCHOOL COPY**

Person visiting _____ Job Role _____

Visited Home Address

Pupil Name

Reason for calling

On (date) _____ at (time) _____

Comments

Signed _____ (Staff Name) _____

Signed _____ (Parent/Guardian Name) _____

Visit authorised by Safeguarding Lead: Date: _____ Time: _____

The top copy of this **MUST** be left at the home.

Outcome of home visit

Action required

This form should be scanned, emailed to the appropriate leader(s) in school (e.g. DSL, attendance lead, and/or pastoral team) and a copy saved on CPOMs, Bromcom or both.

Home Visits

Keeping our staff safe

Before conducting a home visit, staff undertaking the home visit **must** inform office staff and their line manager of their intended location and, if they are returning to school, their anticipated time of return.

If, at any point, the staff member conducting a home visit feels unsafe and needs support, they will call the school and use the **safe phrase....**

**“I am on a home visit, and
I need cover for my duty”**

Upon hearing this, the staff member receiving the call **must** advise the principal or most senior member of staff available who will then request **police assistance**.

If, at any point, the staff member conducting the home visit feels they or anyone within the household is in **immediate danger they must contact 999**. Then inform the principal and school designated safeguarding lead.