



Guidance for Home Visits

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Statutory: No

This guidance has been adapted using the NEU's document on 'lone working'.

Teachers and school staff at Pitcheroak School may work on their own, in greater or lesser degrees, for a variety of reasons. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the lone worker policy and sets out advice on some of the health and safety and other issues which staff and their employers need to consider before carrying out a home visit.

At Pitcheroak School we work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure positive outcomes for all pupils. The first step in that partnership is to offer a home visit for every new family prior to the child coming to the school. This is discussed with the parents/carers and may form part of the pre-admission interview. Parents and carers can choose not to have a home visit.

Parents/carers often feel more relaxed in their own home and appreciate having time to talk on a one-to-one basis. Home visits may help to develop relationships and build trust in a more relaxed environment.

The benefits of home visiting

- Building relationships.
- Linking the pupil's learning from home and school.
- Assisting parents/carers and staff to observe and gain understanding of the pupil's skills/interests.
- To gather information.
- To aid with a smoother transition.
- To help understand behaviour patterns.

Home visits

Teachers and members of school staff visit pupils at home for a variety of reasons. For some, home visiting is part of their job description.

Home visits are conducted to meet children and their families prior to school entry or, to keep in touch with pupils with long-term illness or absence. Head teachers sometimes decide to visit pupils' homes with regard to attendance or behaviour matters, or delegate others to do so.

Ideally home visits will take place during school hours and appointments will be confirmed in writing, text message or by phone call to parents and carers, prior to the visit. A home visit should take no longer than 15-30 minutes.

Ideally a home visit will be conducted in pairs, however this is not a requirement.

When gathering information, we will ensure that we comply with GDPR and ensure that all personal information and notes taken are stored and transported securely between settings.

The legal framework

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have a duty to safeguard the health and safety of their employees. This duty applies whether the employee is working at the usual workplace or off-site. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 require employers to assess the health and safety risks faced by employees and take

appropriate preventative measures, where necessary. The main safety risk associated with home visiting is that of violence, although risks may also arise through other factors.

Undertaking visits

Home visits should be kept to a minimum and all the preparatory steps advised here followed in full. Whether home visits take place on a regular or occasional basis, staff need to feel confident that they are not being placed at risk, either of violence or of allegations of abuse from pupils or their families. The health and safety of staff must always take precedence when the need to make home visits is being considered. The first question should always be: *“Should this visit be made by a social worker/education welfare officer (or equivalent), or someone else trained for and specialising in home visiting?”*

For the majority of staff and head teachers, for whom home visiting is not part of their job description, it is recommended that, wherever possible, meetings should take place in school. Home visiting by staff should always be authorised by the head teacher and/or Deputy Headteacher. Wherever possible, staff should be accompanied by someone trained in home visiting, for example, an education welfare officer. For very young children it may be possible to co-ordinate visits with those made by health visitors, or even to avoid home visits by meeting at the local child health clinic, with the health visitor present.

Avoiding the risk of violence – a checklist

Employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks faced by staff making home visits and to put in place appropriate preventative measures, where necessary. The following non-exhaustive list includes a number of suggested safe systems of work.

This guidance is equally applicable to staff who make only occasional home visits who may find themselves in a more vulnerable position. They should also be provided with the information and support they need in order to ensure their own safety. Staff should seek the support detailed in this checklist before making a home visit.

- are staff fully aware of the risks and ways to minimise them?
- have staff been provided with all relevant information on the pupil, their medical needs and any aggressive tendencies, as well as the background of parents/carers, including any aggressive tendencies?
- are staff aware of the existence of aggressive pets within the family home?
- are staff aware of the need to inform a senior colleague about departure/arrival times who would know how to react if the person has not returned when expected and to phone colleagues about possible changes of plan?
- do staff know that they should carry, and keep switched on, a mobile phone so they are contactable at all times?
- have staff arranged for a telephone call from this responsible contact approximately ten minutes into any visit at a new address to check all is well, and that a code word has been determined beforehand which can be used to summon assistance should this be required?
- have staff arranged a prior appointment with the parent/carer whom they are going to meet?

- Are staff aware not to enter the house if either the child is at home alone or if the parent/carer, with whom the appointment has been made, is not there?
- are staff aware of the importance of leaving the home immediately if they feel uncomfortable in any way (after completing a dynamic risk assessment)?
- are staff aware that they should not give lifts to pupils or family members?
- does the risk assessment require another person to be present during the home visit?
- are staff aware that they must avoid, and be seen to avoid, any act or omission which could call their professionalism into question or otherwise place them in a compromising position?
- do staff know how to report an incident using CPOMS?
- do staff know not to carry large quantities of cash or credit/debit cards when making home visits?
- staff should avoid evening visits wherever possible.
- staff should carry an identity card, which should be shown to family members during the first home visit.

Home visits should be discontinued where there is a known risk of violence or other unacceptable behaviour.

Malicious allegations

School staff who visit pupils at home can be particularly vulnerable to allegations of physical or sexual abuse being made against them. The measures recommended above will also greatly assist in minimising the risks of allegations of abuse. Planning and organising the visit, obtaining all available information on a particular pupil and his/her family and home environment are all sensible measures to take. If deemed necessary, the school should ensure that another responsible adult will be present at all times to avoid being alone with the pupil.

Staff undertaking home visits should be aware of school or employer guidance on child protection in the context of home visits and on discipline, behaviour and restraint.

Should a staff member have any concerns of a safeguarding nature as a result of the visit, details should be recorded as soon as possible, before precise recollections of events fade, using the CPOMS system.