



COTTENHAM VILLAGE COLLEGE HOME VISIT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Policies/Documents referred to in this policy	Post holders/Persons named in this policy
<p>This policy links to other school policies on:</p> <p>Safeguarding Health and Safety Attendance</p>	<p>Safeguarding Officer Attendance Officer Head of Years Assistant Heads of Year Behaviour Manager Receptionist</p>

Home Visit Policy and Procedure

ALL HOME VISITS CONDUCTED BY STAFF *MUST* BE AUTHORISED BY THE SAFEGUARDING OFFICER.

In addition, wherever possible parents/carers should be informed of the home visit prior to arrival, there will be exceptions to this for example a visit to confirm that an absent child is at home when parents/carers are not responding to telephone calls/text messages or emergency safeguarding visits.

Home Visit Definition:

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.

Aims

- At Cottenham Village College we recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make.

The aim of a home visit is:

- To establish a partnership between parents/carers and staff so that all parties share their knowledge about the child to enable the individual needs of the child to be met.
- To develop and strengthen relationships with parents/carers for the best interests of the child.

Reasons for home visits:

Home visits are important in helping the school to make contact with new or hard to reach parents/carers. They are particularly useful as they enable the parents/carers to still have contact with the school, but in their own environment. Home visits are to be used when:

- Students are refusing to come into school
- When there are attendance issues/concerns
- When students are being educated at home
- When all other means of contact with a family has failed

- To meet with parents/carers to discuss an issue regarding their child where it is in the best interest of the child to have that discussion in their own home rather than at school *or* where it would be difficult for a 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 student.
- To work with and support parents/carers in developing strategies to help their child attend school where attendance is an issue.
- To collect from or drop a child off at home where there are concerns for a child's welfare if they travelled by other means.
- To drop off or collect work for a child when they are completing schoolwork at home e.g., following a fixed term exclusion or medical issue.
- To visit a child who has been off school for a period, 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).

Benefits

Home visits have many benefits. For parents/carers and children, a home visit gives the opportunity to meet a key person in a setting that they are familiar and comfortable with. Other opportunities are to:

- Establish a positive contact with a key member of staff who is supporting the child.
- Meet family members that are important to the child.
- Talk about the child and their needs.

Procedures

The aim of the home visit policy procedure is to ensure good working practice and to provide guidelines in reducing risks to member of staff when undertaking home visits.

Before the Visit

- Be familiar with the school's policy for home visits.
- Be clear about the purpose of the visit. **Make sure that a home visit is necessary.** (If possible and/or practical, arrange for parents/carers to come into the school)
- Make a written record of the purpose of the visit and the staff members involved (e.g., as part of an Individual Alternative Education Plan or Attendance Home Visit schedule).
- A 'door-step' visit (where you do not enter the property) is an appropriate visit format on most occasions. You should reflect on this when you consider the potential hazards as part of a risk assessment (see below).
- Where possible arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you. Where possible, home visits should be conducted in pairs. Where you are lone working, ensure that you collect the SOS device from reception, ensure that it is operational and taken on the visit.

- Consider who you need to see, e.g., one or both parents/carers, with or without the child.
- Make sure you are well informed about the subject of the visit, the family and are aware of personal circumstances. Information can be requested from the Head of Year/Assistant Head of Year/Safeguarding Officer (DSL) prior to the visit.
- 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 letter.
- Refer to the **'Lone Working & Home Visits Step Analysis of Risk Assessment' (Appendix 1) and inform reception of your intended location and estimated return time before departing for a home visit.**
- **If you are at all concerned about your safety do not visit.**
- **It is strongly recommended that no one makes an evening home visit.**

During the Visit

- Dress appropriately.
- Introduce yourself, have identification available and explain again the purpose of the visit, carry your identification do not use a necklace lanyard.
- If there is no response from the property, leave a ('sorry we missed you') letter with your details and to advise that a home visit was attempted.
- Do not enter the premises unless invited in by a responsible adult.
- Do not enter the premises if invited to do so by a child that is on the premises unsupervised by a responsible adult.
- Ensure that there are no animals in the room where a meeting takes place.
- Only speak to an adult with parental responsibility (parents/carers) or another responsible adult whom a parents/carers has delegated to be there in their absence and they have given us permission to speak to about the student for whom we are making the home visit.
- Do not speak to siblings other than to ask if their parents/carer is available. Do not discuss the purpose of the visit with siblings or any other unknown young person or adult at the premises.
- Do not go upstairs in a property unless accompanied by a responsible adult and then **ONLY** if you deem it completely safe to do so and necessary.
- **Do not enter a child's/young person's bedroom.**
- If you are concerned that a child/young person is in the home inappropriately alone/unsupervised/in danger, contact the schools designated Safeguarding Officer straight away to discuss your observations or to seek immediate advice from them if you are uncertain whether the child is alone/unsupervised/in danger. If appropriate the Safeguarding Officer (DSL) will make a referral to social care.
- If you feel that a child/young person is in immediate danger contact emergency services on 999.
- Assure parents/carers that you will treat anything they tell you sensitively and will only tell the Principal or other appropriate staff. Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting. Do not promise *not to* relay information to school. Remember that under the child protection procedures you must report disclosures or suspicions to the designated teacher for child protection.
- Be sensitive to the culture, religion etc of the home.
- Request that parents do not smoke during your visit – staff should leave if parents/carers refuse to comply with this request.

- Be professional; give professional advice and information rather than personal opinions.
- Be sympathetic but remain neutral. Don't get personally involved. Be discreet but assertive about the direction of the conversation; do not gossip about the school or staff.
- Do not stay too long. Keep to the point.
- Do not carry large sums of money when making a home visit.

After the visit

- Complete the Home Visit Microsoft Form to evidence the visit and to share information.
- Any safeguarding concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with the Safeguarding Officer (DSL) on arrival back/entered on CPOMS.
- If you are not returning directly to school, telephone, or email school after the visit to say you have left the home visit.
- At school, do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved with those particular children.
- If you have noted any inappropriate activity in the property during the visit, this must be recorded and, if necessary, reported to the relevant authority.
- If an accusation of abuse is made against the visit/visitor advice should be sought from the Principal as soon as possible.

Action to take if you are threatened

- If you are threatened or prevented from leaving stay calm, try to control the situation and press the SOS button to activate contact centre support. Try to appear confident, speak slowly and clearly and not be enticed into an argument. Try to diffuse the situation by saying you will seek advice from a senior member of staff or colleague.
- Keep your distance, never touch, or turn your back on someone who is angry.
- Wait outside the property until all staff involved have arrived.
- Consider whether sending out two members of staff may escalate the difficulties. If so, the second member of staff should remain in sight of the property should there be the need for increased support.
- When working as a pair agree a code word (safe word) or phrase to alert a colleague that you need assistance or should leave.
- Staff must leave the property and reach a place of safety if you have any concerns about personal safety and inform school immediately.

Appendix 1: Community Lone Working Risk Assessment

WORK ACTIVITY RISK ASSESSMENT: Task being undertaken: - Lone Working Risk Assessment – out of office. Occupations: -All Staff. Any vulnerable persons particularly at risk: - Safeguarding team aware of named visit Date of assessment: - Any

Hazards	People	Severity of harm	Likelihood	Risk Level	Controls
Aggressive or violent parent/student/family member	Member of staff may be harmed	Major injury may occur	Remote possibility	low	Refer to home visit policy, risk reduced by informing safeguarding team prior to visit 2 person visit wherever possible Inform reception and sign out so, others are aware Take mobile phone for communication Carry SOS device
Driving	Member of staff may be harmed	Vehicle breakdown Accident Intruder in vehicle when unattended Use of mobile phone Fatigue	Remote possibility	Low	Maintain vehicle properly Belong to a breakdown organisation Carry torch, phone etc for emergency Advise team or partner where you are going Phone in if plan changes Do not leave valuables in car (e.g., laptop) Avoid risky areas where advice has been received from partner organisations

Movement through public areas e.g.	Member of staff may be harmed	Attack Theft of property	remote	Low	Back down from confrontation Call for help using SOS device
to/from car parks					Keep valuables secure and out of sight or disguised Surrender valuables if personal safety is at risk
Illness or injury/accident	Member of staff may be harmed or injured	Illness or injury Take mobile communications	Remote	low	Alert Emergency services if appropriate Alert team members if able to Ensure access to phone and SOS device Take prescribed medication as directed or as needed Complete injury at work protocol on return
Attack by dog or other animal	Member of staff may be harmed or injured	Major injury may occur	Remote	Low	Avoid contact with animals Seek local advice before entering premises with animals Appropriate behaviour near animals – avoid alarming them, e.g., sudden movements

