Home visit policy

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Statement of intent

Our school is part of ACE Derbyshire Trust.

At Morley Primary School, staff may be required to undertake home visits for a variety of reasons, such as to support pupils' attendance, provide tuition, and to establish partnerships with parents to secure the best support for their child. The school is committed to ensuring all home visits are effective and procedures are in place to minimise potential risks to staff and pupils.

This policy sets out how home visits will be conducted in order to ensure:

- Visits always have a clear and legitimate purpose.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for all visits.
- The health and safety of staff is prioritised.
- Sufficient records are kept.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are adhered to at all times.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education 2026'
- DfE 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance and Absence Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy
- Physical Intervention Policy
- Lone Worker Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Driving at Work Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Local Governing Committee will be responsible for:

- Ensuring appropriate procedures are in place for home visits.
- Ensuring staff conducting home visits have received appropriate training, where necessary.
- Ensuring the effective implementation of the school's safeguarding procedures during home visits.

- Ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements are in place to cover staff undertaking home visits.

The headteacher will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Approving all home visits and ensuring they only take place where necessary and appropriate.
- Ensuring staff understand and follow the school's home visit arrangements.
- Ensuring the appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- Ensuring risk assessments are completed for home visits.
- Ensuring staff conducting home visits are provided with relevant background information and circumstances to inform the risks that may be present.
- Ensuring visits are integrated into safeguarding, attendance and early help plans where relevant.
- Ensuring visits are recorded in the pupil's safeguarding or attendance file.

Staff conducting home visits will be responsible for:

- Following this policy for all home visits.
- Acting professionally and sensitively, with due regard to all relevant school policies and procedures.
- Seeking authorisation for all home visits and ensuring the school has all the relevant details of the visit.
- Prioritising their own health and safety during visits.
- Seeing and speaking with the pupil concerned during welfare visits, where safe and appropriate.
- Keeping detailed, factual records of all visits.

3. Home visits

Home visits will be undertaken for a number of reasons. This will include, but is not limited to, when:

- Safeguarding concerns require seeing a pupil in their home environment.
- Unexplained or unauthorised absence cannot be resolved through other contact methods.
- Early help assessments indicate a home visit could provide valuable insight or support.
- Attendance is at risk of becoming, or is already, persistently low, and barriers need to be understood and addressed.
- Parents cannot attend meetings at the school due to disability, illness or other valid reasons.

Home visits will be used proactively to engage with families early, remove attendance barriers, and prevent issues from escalating.

Home visits will be scheduled in advance with the agreement of the parents, unless the visit is due to an emergency or immediate concern, e.g. an unauthorised absence with no contact from parents or a safeguarding issue.

All home visits will require the authorisation of the headteacher/DSL. Home visits will only be authorised where they are deemed necessary and in the best interests of the pupil concerned. An appointment form will be completed before a home visit with necessary details, e.g. the expected time, location, people attending, which is kept and held in the school office.

Home visits will take place during school hours wherever possible. Home visits outside of school hours will only be authorised if absolutely necessary and there is no reasonable alternative – in such cases, a responsible contact will be established to check on the welfare of staff conducting the visit.

Staff will carry an identity card or badge which is shown upon arrival for a first visit at a home – the card will not be worn around the neck. If the pupil's parents are not present at the arranged time, staff will wait no longer than 20 minutes. If the pupil's parents do not arrive, the visit will be cancelled.

Staff will not enter a pupil's home if they feel unsafe. If a visit is cancelled because of concerns over safety, the reason for cancelling the visit will be communicated in writing to the headteacher.

If there are potentially dangerous animals in the residence, the school will request that they are kept in a separate room or placed outside for the duration of the visit. If the parent refuses, or is unable to adhere to this request, the visit will be cancelled.

Any issues or incidents during a home visit will be reported to the headteacher.

Where a staff member cannot be contacted or located during or after a home visit, the headteacher will be notified as soon as possible to decide on the appropriate response. The police will be contacted where there is concern for a staff member's welfare.

4. Personal safety

Wherever possible, lone working will be avoided during home visits. At least two staff members will conduct home visits together, unless the headteacher decides it is safe and appropriate for a home visit to be conducted alone.

A risk assessment for an instance of lone working will be carried out prior to the commencement of any home visit undertaken by a single staff member and will be updated in response to any changes in circumstances. Lone visits should only take place where a risk assessment demonstrates they are safe and appropriate.

The headteacher will ensure staff are aware of the following before a home visit:

- The findings of the relevant risk assessment, i.e. the risks and how to minimise them
- The area they will be visiting and any relevant information
- Information on the pupil(s) involved, e.g. medical needs, any aggressive tendencies
- Relevant background information and family circumstances, e.g. aggressive tendencies, cultural sensitivities
- The potential presence of any aggressive pets
- The need to provide details of the visit, e.g. an itinerary with expected departure and arrival times
- The need to always carry identification and a charged mobile phone that is always switched on.
- To never enter a home without an appropriate adult present
- To prioritise their health and safety and leave if at any point they feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- The importance of reporting any incidents to the headteacher as soon as possible

A Home Visit Risk Assessment will be conducted by the headteacher. If a particular home visit poses new or additional risks, the risk assessment will be updated before the visit.

It is the responsibility of staff conducting home visits to keep themselves safe at all times. Staff will be instructed to avoid any situations that may risk their safety. Before entering the home and once inside, staff will identify possible exit routes and ensure they always have access to escape quickly in the event of an emergency. Staff are expected to continually assess risk during a visit and terminate the visit immediately if circumstances change and safety can no longer be assured.

Staff conducting home visits will carry a mobile phone, which will remain switched on at all times. The number will be recorded and held by the school office. During visits, staff will avoid carrying large amounts of cash or valuable personal possessions. Where a staff member feels uncomfortable or unsafe at any point, they will end the visit immediately. The police will be contacted where there is a threat or use of violence.

The school office will check in by calling a staff member ten minutes into a visit's scheduled start time. Thereafter, staff will notify the school office when they are departing the pupil's home and confirm whether there are any concerns. A code word will be established to enable staff to discretely alert that help is needed if required during a phone call or text.

Staff will notify the school office of any changes to the schedule of a home visit, e.g. a delay due to traffic, as soon as possible.

Details of the vehicles used by staff conducting home visits, including make, model, registration number and colour, will be held by the school.. Where possible, staff will park in a safe and well-lit area with the car facing in the opposite direction of the property.

5. Training

Before performing their duties, staff conducting home visits will undergo the appropriate training in strategies for the prevention of violence, and other training deemed relevant by the headteacher, e.g. cultural awareness.

Where home visits relate to attendance or safeguarding, staff will receive specific training on using home visits in early help and attendance improvement work.

The headteacher may delegate or request a member of staff undertakes a home visit – where a staff member is regularly required to undertake home visits, this will be reflected in their job description, and appropriate training will be provided.

Where possible, at least one staff member in attendance will be specifically trained in home visiting, e.g. an education welfare officer.

6. Attendance officer visits

All attendance officers will work in partnership with the SLT, the LA's School Attendance Support Team and any other relevant partners. Home visits for the purpose of attendance support and improvement will be used in line with the Attendance and Absence Policy.

Visits will be used to identify barriers to attendance, agree actions with parents and monitor progress.

After a visit, any agreements made between an attendance officer and parents will be recorded on My Concern. Reminder letters will be sent to the pupil's parents if the pupil fails to adhere to the agreements made during the home visit. Continued failure to adhere to the agreement will result in a follow-up visit.

7. Child protection and safeguarding

Staff conducting home visits will carry out their work in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy at all times.

The DSL or Deputy DSL will take part in all home visits that directly involve safeguarding concerns or form part of a statutory child protection process. For other types of home visits, the visiting staff member will immediately inform the DSL if any safeguarding concerns arise during or after the visit. Where there are serious concerns about a pupil's immediate safety or welfare, staff will contact the police and relevant safeguarding agencies without delay, and then inform the DSL as soon as it is safe to do so.

Prior to a staff member being assigned to undertake a home visit, the school will ensure the staff member has the appropriate level of DBS check. An enhanced DBS and barred list check will be undertaken where necessary.

The headteacher will ensure staff understand the Staff Code of Conduct continues to apply during home visits. Staff will never enter a home or stay inside without an appropriate adult present. Staff will not hold conversations with siblings or other children in the home without an appropriate adult present.

Where possible, staff will leave physical intervention for parents to avoid allegations of misconduct. Where staff intervention is required, staff will act in accordance with the Physical Intervention Policy. Staff will only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and it will be the

minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person. Staff will make a record of the incident as soon as reasonably possible and share it with the headteacher.

Staff conducting home visits will report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL or a deputy as soon as possible. Serious concerns about a pupil's immediate welfare will be reported to the police and any relevant agencies.

Any allegations made against staff conducting home visits will be dealt with in accordance with the Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy or Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

When a home visit forms part of an assessment following a referral, the DSL will meet with families and carry out home visits as needed to fully understand the pupil's circumstances. Where appropriate, a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager will undertake joint visits to support the assessment process. These supervisors or managers will continue to meet families and join home visits as needed to review the pupil's plan, working in partnership to ensure that the help provided is achieving significant, positive change at a pace appropriate for the pupil's needs.

8. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Education and Headteacher.

The headteacher will be responsible for monitoring this policy and procedures and will amend it accordingly following any incidents or concerns. Feedback from staff who have conducted home visits will be used to inform the review process.