

Policy document control box	
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Policy owner (including job title)	Heather Jolly (Head of Centre)
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify the procedures for RBNch staff carrying out a home visit safely and effectively for students on role in the Centre. For the purpose of this policy, a home visit is a visit that requires member(s) of staff to enter the home of

a parent/carer in the case of an emergency or a procedural visit. It is acceptable, in some cases, to not enter the home in order to conduct a welfare check.

Home Visits: Aims and Reasons

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
- Develop and strengthen relationships with parents/carers for the best interests of the child.

Home visits are important in helping the school to contact 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 to school
- When there are attendance issues/concerns
- When students are being educated at home whilst still being on roll at the school
- When all other means of contact with a family have failed
- 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 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

The above list is not exhaustive as other situations may arise when a home visit is required, however, this will be discussed with the DSL or deputies prior to authorisation for a visit.

Benefits

Home visits may have 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 for Home Visits

All home visits conducted by staff must be authorised by the Head of Centre or Deputy.

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 if an emergency safeguarding visit is required where it would not be appropriate to call ahead.

Before the Visit

Prior to the visit, it is the responsibility of the member(s) of staff conducting the visit to:

- Be familiar with the school's policy and procedures for home visits
- Be clear about the purpose of the visit. Make sure that a home visit is really necessary
- Ensure the Head of Centre or Deputy know where you are going and when to expect you to return to school
- Arrange for an appropriate person to accompany you. Where possible home visits should be conducted in pairs. Clarify each person's role during the home visit to the parent/carer
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances
- Consider the family carefully when deciding who will conduct the home visit; in some cases, gender may need to be considered

During the Visit

The member(s) of staff conducting a home visit need to make sure they follow the procedures below:

- Introduce yourself, have identification available and explain the purpose of the visit
- Carry your identification; do not wear a necklace lanyard
- Do not enter the premises if invited to do so by a child that is on the premises unsupervised by a responsible adult
- 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
- Be very aware of body language that may indicate any form of opinion or judgement about the home situation or the personal circumstances of the family
- If you feel that a child/young person is in immediate danger, contact emergency services 999
- Assure parents/carers that you will treat anything they tell you sensitively and will only share with relevant professionals. Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting
- Be professional; give professional advice and information rather than personal opinions
- Be sympathetic, but remain neutral - do not get personally involved
- Be discreet but assertive about the direction of the conversation
- Do not carry large sums of money, items of worth or personal information when making a home visit

After the Visit

All home visits will need to be followed up upon return to the Centre:

- Inform the Head of Centre or Deputy that you have arrived back safely
- Log the visit and all the relevant information on My Concern
- If you are not returning directly to school, telephone the school after the visit to say you have safely completed your home visit
- Any safeguarding concerns should be immediately followed up, using school's Safeguarding Policy
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved. This includes making comments or judgements about the situation at home
- If an accusation of abuse is made against the visitor, advice should be sought from the Head of Centre or Deputy as soon as possible

Action to take if you are threatened

The protection and safety of our staff is important. If a member of staff is threatened in any way, it is important that the following actions are taken:

- If you are threatened or prevented from leaving, stay calm and try to control the situation
- 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 a senior member of staff or colleague
- Keep your distance; never touch or turn your back on someone who is angry
- If staff attend as a pair, wait outside the property until all staff involved have left the premises
- If working as a pair, agree a code word (safe word) or phrase to alert a colleague that you need assistance or should leave
- The same code word should be used if you contact school to alert them that you are in danger and need support
- If you are concerned about your safety do not visit
- If staff are in immediate danger and are able to do so, they should call 999

Other Red Balloon Norwich (RBNch) policies that should be read in conjunction with this one:

- Health and Safety
- Staff Code of Conduct
- First Aid
- Safeguarding and Child Protection