



Home Visits Policy – Addendum

Version Control

This is version 1.0 of this addendum. It will be reviewed by our Safeguarding Lead on a weekly basis or as circumstances continue to evolve or following any updated advice. It will be shared with all headteachers, DSL's and those who may be asked to undertake a home visit.

New Guidance

The CV-19 outbreak has seen unprecedented challenges as our schools are now closed to all but a minority of children. At the same time, we have been tasked with, ensuring that our vulnerable children, who are not in school, remain safe.

Under normal circumstances, safe and well visits would have been our main mechanism for checking up on the wellbeing of a child. However, these are not normal circumstances and as such, and to ensure the safety of our staff, we **are now not allowing staff** to enter a child's home. This is in line with Professional Association guidance.

Staff are encouraged to contact families by phone, email or video call. It is important that staff follow the guidelines laid out in the Staff Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use of technologies Policy when making these calls. Additional guidance has also been issued.

Home visits during which staff enter a family home are **not allowed** during this period. However, if you have been unable to contact a child and have serious concerns you should follow the steps below

- Re- assess the risk. Does the lack of contact escalate your concerns?
- Try all the available numbers for the family, including all emergency contact numbers
- Try all other professionals who are involved with the family. Consider other schools where there may be siblings.
- For CP/CiN/LAC EHCP or Early Help speak to their allocated social worker or any other professional involved such as a family support worker or mental health worker.
- Consider speaking to your local social care provision such as MASH CASS or First Response.

- If the risk is deemed critical - speak to the Police, they may do a 'safe & well' check
- Do not hesitate to call 999 if you think a child has been harmed or is at serious risk of harm.
- Contact the senior education safeguarding officer for support if needed along with your headteacher and ATLP safeguarding lead.
- Record all your concerns and actions in line with school child protection procedures.

If deemed necessary and after following these steps and in consultation with your head teacher a doorstep visit may be considered. **This is the absolute last resort!**

You must follow the guidelines below. However, it is important to stress that this is a voluntary activity and if you do not feel able or willing to do this please discuss this with your headteacher

Doorstep visits

There may be occasions when staff need to visit a home but not enter. Again, these should be rare and only undertaken if there is **no alternative and you have exhausted all other methods to make contact.**

All doorstep visits must be risk assessed. If agreed that a doorstep is necessary, it should be undertaken by two members of staff. Normal procedures outlined in the full body of this policy must be followed regarding signing in and out and mobiles phones.

It is unlikely that doorstep visits will be frequent. It may be that despite repeated attempts staff are still unable to make any contact by phone with a family and have not been able to speak to child and gain assurances that they are OK. Staff have tried all the suggestions above and have not been successful. This is especially important where there may have been a previous history of physical abuse, domestic violence or mental health issues, including suicidal thoughts. After assessing the risk, it may be decided to undertake a visit. This assessment should be made in consultation with the headteacher. These are exceptional circumstances and this decision must not be taken lightly. If the decision is to visit you must undertake and follow a risk assessment based on the following guidelines:

1. Any doorstep visit must be risk assessed. There is a CV-19 Risk Assessment attached to this guidance that supplements the Risk Assessment form within the body of the policy.
2. The doorstep visit should be undertaken by two members of staff. To comply with social distancing, they should always travel separately and always remain at a distance from one another. It would be expected that any member of staff who has an underlying health condition/vulnerability would be at home self- isolating. For the absence of doubt, no such staff member will therefore undertake such a visit.

3. Ideally one member of staff should be a DSL and one known to the family. Normal procedures outlined in the full body of this policy must be followed regarding signing in and out and carrying mobile phones.
4. Staff carrying out the visit must wear gloves and avoid contacting hard surfaces with their bare skin. They will knock on the door with covered hands. After knocking on the door, they will step back maintaining social distance requirements.
5. If you get a response try to establish whether any members of the household have CV-19 symptoms.
6. If this is the case, move further away and look to ending the visit as soon as is possible.
7. However it may be possible to enquire about the child from a safe distance or even see the child if not confined to bed but only through a window.
8. The DSL should inform the parents of the need to do a safe and well check and the measures already taken to establish contact. They should explain that they need to see the child through the window or at a safe distance.
9. Visiting staff will try to talk to the child keeping the conversation as positive and upbeat and as short as possible. They must ask the child directly how they are.
10. Staff must not enter the household, even if invited in, but simply check the child is well by a conversation, maintaining the two-metre distance.
11. Staff must make every effort to see the child and question their welfare from outside the home. You must record what they say and how they present.
12. If possible, future channels of communication should be established
13. If you do not make contact leave a note to say you have called and asking the family to make immediate contact with school.
14. Upon return to school, wash your hands thoroughly, sign back in and complete visit records.
15. If after a doorstep visit you have still not made contact and are still concerned revisit the list above and then seek further advice from CASS/First Response /MASH or the Police.
16. If known in advance the family is self-isolating it is not appropriate to make a visit, even a doorstep visit. Staff must try to keep in touch by the channels described above.

Our Safeguarding priorities remain the same and we will always have the best interests of the child as our first to priority, but we must keep our staff safe.

