



HOME VISITS POLICY

Tees Valley Education Trust

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1 INTRODUCTION

All staff who undertake home visits are responsible for ensuring that they have read and understood this policy along with the Trust's Health and Safety Policy and Safeguarding Policy. It is the responsibility of ALL STAFF to take all necessary precautions to ensure their own safety and the safety of others and to co-operate with the Trust in meeting their legal obligations whilst conducting home visits.

2 PRE-VISIT

2.1 Family Information

- Before making an initial home visit, as much information as possible should be sought to ascertain any possible risks. Make sure all possible information is obtained about the family.
- Ascertain details of other agencies involved.
- Consider any special needs the family or individuals within it may have.
- Find out if an interpreter is required and give them enough notice of the visit.
- Check the "don't visit alone register".
- If there are concerns, arrange for initial contact to be made at an alternative venue to the home e.g. the Academy, Trust Head Office, local centre etc.

2.2 Unplanned Visits

- Staff should wear, or carry with them, an identification badge or card and should always show them upon arrival.
- Reason for visits should be clearly explained.
- If there is no reply, put a contact card through the letterbox.
- If there is no response to the contact card, a planned visit should be arranged.

2.3 Arranging a Planned Visit

- Attempt to contact by letter to pre-arrange visit.
- Letters should contain visit time, date and full contact details.
- If the parent/carer is not in for a visit, put a new appointment card through letterbox.
- If the parent/carer is not in for second visit, leave a message card with contact details.
- If visit is not made, refer back to Team Leader or Head Teacher/Head of Academy.

2.4 Communications

- Staff working in the community should be contactable at all times and be in a position to call for assistance, if required. It is the responsibility of the Trust/academy to make mobile phones available for staff and the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that they carry a mobile phone with them at all times, that it is charged and switched on.
- Staff should be locatable and contactable at all times. A system should be in place for:
 - Recording details of appointments.
 - Name of the family, location, contact number.
 - Date and time of visit.
 - Expected time of return from the visit.

- Recording the visit (see the Home Visiting Safety Log, **Appendix A**)
- Recording of vehicle being used for the visit.
- Staff must comply fully with the [Work Related Road Safety Policy](#) and, where applicable, the [Employee Transportation of Children Policy](#).
- If staff find that the visit is going to take longer than expected, they should inform the Academy Office.
- If a member of staff does not return at the expected time, it is the responsibility of the Academy Office to phone the member of staff and alert the Head Teacher/Head of Academy.
- If the appointment is at the end of the day, the member of staff should report back to the Academy Office or Head Teacher/Head of Academy, to let them know that the visit has been concluded. The Academy Office or Head Teacher/Head of Academy will attempt to contact the staff member if they have not reported back as expected.

3 VISIT

If possible:

- If there is very little information regarding a family (e.g. a family new to the area) visits should be made in pairs.
- If visits are to be made in pairs, it should be made clear to the parent that there will be a second person.
- Staff should wear or carry with them an identification badge or card and should always show them in initial visits. It may not be appropriate on some occasions to wear them.
- Only take appropriate documents.
- Do not take unnecessary valuables or equipment.

Members of staff should:

- Avoid clothing that exposes significant amounts of flesh e.g. low cut tops, short skirts.
- Wear flat shoes or low heels.
- Bear in mind that clothing can also be used to grab or restrain, therefore try to avoid bags, jewellery or scarves that may provide opportunity to do so.
- Be aware of cultural expectations, such as removing shoes before entering the property.

3.1 Travel

- Location and directions should be confirmed prior to visit.
- When arriving at the home, always park car facing the right way to be able to drive away quickly.
- Consider parking locations for safety and security.

If on foot:

- Stick to a planned route and avoid short cuts.
- Make sure clothing and footwear is practical.
- Walk facing traffic on the street side, so that cars cannot easily drive up behind.
- Carry a personal alarm and use it if necessary.
- If concerned about being followed, cross the street and walk away in the direction of a place with people.

- If bag is snatched – let it go.

3.2 During the Visit

- DO NOT go upstairs, unless unavoidable.
- Do not spread belongings about; this makes it difficult to make a quick exit.
- When inside, study the surroundings to make sure of an easy, clear exit. Try to take position between the parent and an external door.
- Leave as soon as possible if feeling uneasy or at risk.
- The client may have different expectations of the purpose of the visit. State:
 - Name and role.
 - Purpose and length of visit.
- Do not make assumptions about parents and their expectations.
- Do not show an obvious reaction to bad, dirty or smelly surroundings, it is their home, do not make personal comments.
- Do not disclose personal information e.g. home address, phone number.
- If the visit does not go as planned and other issues may arise, e.g. a depressed parent, behavioural, child protection or mental health issues, domestic abuse – be flexible, do not push the agenda of the planned visit, take time to listen and plan with the family the actions they feel they need which could include:
 - Arranging another visit.
 - Involving another agency (with family's permission).
 - Leaving a contact number.
 - Making sure the family have appropriate contact details.

3.3 Animals

- Avoid handling or petting animals if possible.
- If you have any concerns about an animal within the home, leave or do not enter.

3.4 Lifting/Handling

- Do not lift or handle anything that you are NOT sure you are competent to do.
- Make a visual check on equipment yourself – check for loose/broken wires, incomplete plugs, loose sockets etc.

4 AFTER THE VISIT

4.1 Documentation

Following each visit, a relevant, accurate report must be recorded on the Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS) within 24 hours of the contact. Regular reporting of contact and the effectiveness of support should be ongoing between staff members and their line manager or Head Teacher/Head of Academy. All documentation should meet the standards of the Data Protection Act and the Trust's [GDPR Policy](#). If information needs to be passed to another member of staff, log this.

4.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Sharing of information is on a “need to know” basis. Where possible, always gain the family’s consent to share information with other agencies. In case of a child protection issue, follow the child protection/safeguarding protocol.

4.3 Inter-agency Referral

If it is necessary to refer a family to another agency following the visit, make sure this is logged. If appropriate, follow up the referral.

4.4 Post-Incident Procedures

Should an incident occur during a home visit:

- Write an incident report.
- Discuss at Vulnerable Children’s Meeting.
- Ensure this information is communicated to other agencies and members of school staff where appropriate.
- Follow child protection/safeguarding procedures if relevant.
- Discuss action with Line Manager or Head Teacher/Head of Academy.
- Request an opportunity for a debrief with another member of staff or, where necessary, request counselling. It is the responsibility of staff who are distressed or affected by an incident and feel they are not competent to continue with their daily duties to seek support and not feel obliged to “just carry on”.

APPENDIX A: HOME VISITING SAFETY LOG

***Mode of travel** - (Please specify your mode of travel, including, where applicable, car registration, make and model, the taxi company used and car registration or brief details of planned route if on foot/other means of travel)

STAFF NAME(S)	MOBILE NO.(S)	MODE OF TRAVEL	FAMILY VISITING	ADDRESS	DATE & TIME OF VISIT	TIME OF RETURN	✓