

Alexandra Primary School



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Primary School

Aspire, Perform, Succeed

**A policy for staff to detail procedures
and protocols for home visits**

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Rationale

Home visits are not statutory responsibilities of schools. However, they can provide additional context in a setting that enables children and families to engage with school. At Alexandra Primary School, we use home visits to support information gathering for both parents and school staff at the beginning of the Early Years journey, often when children are transitioning from playgroup or other settings into Nursery or Reception. Home visits can also be used to support children where there are welfare and attendance concerns.

The safety of all school staff carrying out home visits is paramount. Where home visits take place, a risk assessment should be completed in advance. This will identify any concerns about potential risks and appropriate measures to be taken. If specific information is known about families, this should be added to the risk assessment.

General Protocols for Home Visits

- Plan the visit beforehand and complete a risk assessment – see Appendix 1
- Check records to see what is known and information available.
- Talk to other professionals who may already have had contact or involvement with the family.
- Be prepared. If you are going somewhere new, check out the location prior to the visit so that you are familiar with the area. This helps you get to safety quicker if needs be.

- Obtain information about the location of the home visit. For example, does the area have a reputation for being unsafe, isolated or poorly lit?
- If possible, it's also a good idea to find out more about the person you are visiting, therefore, you'll be more prepared and aware of potential issues before you arrive.
- Discuss strategies to adopt when working with a potentially challenging Parent / Carer / Family with your line manager.
- Wherever possible conduct your home visit with a colleague.
- Where potential risks are identified, arrange an alternative meeting environment
- Make sure the office team know where you are going and approximately when you'll be back
- Contact details should be stored and easily accessible
- Study your environment and do a mini risk assessment
- Arrive early and observe your surroundings from the safety of your vehicle. Note the exits, observe who is present and look for any possible dangers, such as dogs.
- Assess how easily you'd be able to leave in an emergency.
- Ask that all uncaged animals are put in a separate room.
- Ask if anyone else is currently in the home
- Trust your instincts
- When you arrive at someone's home, have a brief conversation on the doorstep to gauge the mental state of the occupant before you enter. Be aware of signs of intoxication. If someone is impaired such as drugs or alcohol, leave and report when back at school.
- Remain on guard and listen for any signs of trouble. If you sense something is wrong and you feel your safety is compromised by entering the property, make an excuse and leave.
- Choose a safe place and position yourself between the door and the other party
- Keep a clear path to the door so that you don't allow yourself to become trapped in. Sit in a hard-backed chair if you can, as this makes it easier to get up quickly.
- Choose a safe place for the meeting. Kitchens typically have many items that can be used as weapons, such as utensils and knives so it may be safer to meet in a sitting room or another safe alternative.
- Make sure you call the school office when you leave the property.
- If you are unable to gain an answer at the property leave a note asking occupant to call the school office. Make sure this has a date and time on it and save this on the school file.
- If a visit is considered high risk then a home visit should not take place. A more safe and secure area at the school should be used for the appointment.

The whereabouts of employees on home visits should be accounted for at all times a name address and approximate timings should be left with the school office. This is so that someone is expecting them and will be aware if they fail to arrive back from an appointment on time. If you have not checked in by an agreed time someone from the school office should call you on your mobile.

All staff contact details, such as their mobile phone number, car registration and an up-to-date photo are held on ScholarPack and is accessible to those responsible for employees.

Risk Assessment (RA)

A risk assessment should be considered for all welfare / attendance visits. A general RA should be completed for EYFS Home Visits unless there are other concerns already known to school.

Health and Safety as part of the RA process

- Inform a nominated member of staff when you are leaving for a home visit.
- Leave the details of the home visit schedule with a member of the office staff. Include a list of visit addresses and times including family name, child's name, address, telephone number, and time due back at school.
- Carry with you and show the parent some your school identification.
- Demonstrate normal courtesy – wait to be invited into the home.
- If a child answers the door, ask if an adult is present in the house before entering. Do not enter if an adult is not present.
- If the Parent / Carer appears at all uncomfortable about the visit continuing, staff should offer to leave, offer to continue the contact with a telephone call and give the Parent / Carer the telephone number of the school.
- During home visits, it is prudent to park your car in the direction of your exit. This may save vital seconds in the event of needing a swift exit from an emergency situation.
- Where possible, all home visits should be carried out during normal working hours (9.00am – 5.00pm) with due regard to the daylight hours. Particularly in the winter months take all possible steps to ensure that your last home visit ends before sunset.
- Where practicalities dictate your appointment is likely to end after 5pm or outside daylight hours, take special care to ensure the guidelines above are adhered to. Inform your line manager prior to the visit and on completion. Text them informing them when you enter and leave the home and arrange for them to call you at a specific time if they have not heard from you.
- Wear clothes and shoes that do not hinder movement or your ability to run in case of emergency.
- If you feel anxious upon arriving at a home visit location and feel your personal safety could be jeopardised, **do not take the risk of proceeding any further**. Telephone the home and tell them you will be unable to attend. Then return to school and relay your concerns to your line manager.
- When conducting a home visit your safety is of paramount importance. Your professional judgement should be used in deciding whether to continue with a visit. Use common sense, trust your instincts and if a situation feels dangerous or threatening – leave, saying for example that you need to get something from your car.
- Should you need to stop a visit over a threat to your personal safety you must immediately move to a place of refuge and if necessary call the police. Your concerns should be conveyed to your line manager straight away.
- Confrontation should always be avoided. At the first sign of potential threat you should make a swift exit from the home. While there are hundreds of home visits made safely every day you should never assume that violence wouldn't happen to you. Good preparation is the key factor in ensuring your safety and that of all employees working out in the community.
- Family Support Workers should keep clear and detailed chronologies of contact for every family / home visit and meeting that they attend using CPOMs. However trivial these details seem at the time, this will raise awareness and may well prevent problems from being encountered in the future.

- Report back to the school office and sign in immediately after the visit is finished informing staff that you are safe. The member of office staff on duty must advise the Head Teacher if staff carrying out a home visit have not returned / made contact by the appointed time and locally agreed actions must be followed.

Early Years Home Visits

At APS we believe that our first encounter with families is crucial in helping to form a positive partnership between home and school. Parents and Carers have extensive knowledge of their child which is valuable to school staff and will help them to provide a smooth transition and valuable experiences for them at school.

Home visits provide an opportunity to share this knowledge in an informal way and in a familiar environment. They will generally last between 20 to 30 minutes.

Aims for EYs Home Visits:

- To build a positive and caring relationship between the staff and the family before their child begins school.
- To meet with the child in a familiar environment to ease the settling in period.
- To ensure the child has met the staff on familiar territory to help them with the transition from home to school.
- To allow the child to share their favourite toys, games and books with school staff if they wish to.
- To encourage families to share information about their children which can be used to help with the transition process. This includes finding out about children's interests at home and personal skills such as getting changed and using cutlery.
- To provide an opportunity for families to ask questions or share information about their child and ensure that this is private

Before the visit

- Make appointments in advance and offer alternative dates / times, to be done with the school office
- Ensure that parents know when you will arrive, how long you will stay, what will happen, what kinds of questions you will be asking and what information you will bring
- Ask them to think about the information they need from you in advance of the meeting
- Accept the right of a family not to want a home visit
- Confirm Parents / Carers and child's actual name and title and keep on record.
- Do not presume that there are two parents with the same surname as the child
- Do not assume that all Parents / Carers are literate.
- Make sure you consider diversity of social, cultural, racial, religious and sexual orientation
- Familiarise yourself with the route / location, parking restrictions etc. before you leave. Check with Designated Safeguarding Leads who may have additional safeguarding information
- Leave details of your visiting schedule and expected return time with another member of staff in the office, ensuring you sign out

During the Visit:

- At all times, the needs of the individual child are paramount.
- All parents / carers are given the opportunity to be visited at home by members of the school staff.
- Staff will attend home visits in pairs for their own security. They must leave a list of where they are going and a mobile number in the school office.
- Staff will be conscious of the fact that they are guests in the family's home and will treat all families with a high level of respect during the visit.
- The home visit is a means of talking to the family, gaining information about the child and answering any questions the family may have.
- During the visit one adult will focus on the child and engage them in an activity of the child's choosing. The other adult will gather information from the parents about the child's interests and will answer any questions the parents have.
- Be a good listener.
- Be aware of pets and other adults who may be in the home. If necessary, ask the family to put any uncaged animals in a separate room.
- Sit near a door or exit and if you feel uneasy or worried at any time, make an excuse and leave.
- Staff should avoid commenting on a child's home or provision so that parents do not feel that any judgement is being made on their home or lifestyle.
- Staff should demonstrate an awareness and respect for differing cultures and should comply with appropriate customs such as removing shoes, wearing modest clothing etc.
- Staff should remain aware of time constraints on both themselves and parents.
- Maintain professional boundaries in your relationship with the family e.g. do not drink alcohol or smoke with them and don't accept presents.
- Consider confidentiality at all times. Do not chat about other families that the family is in contact with. Do not discuss anything in front of other family members without checking beforehand or privately that it is ok to do so.
- Consider safeguarding policies and procedures at all times. You need to be prepared to deal with the unexpected such as: Young children 'home alone', poor home conditions that pose an immediate risk to child's safety or wellbeing, marks or bruises on a child that give you cause for concern or information about sexual abuse or domestic abuse
- Before you leave, check that family members are satisfied with the outcome of the visit and if appropriate are clear about: Any plans made, what will happen next, who will do what
- Unless you have child protection concerns, if there is information to be shared with other agencies, check with the family: What is to be shared, who with, by whom.
- If you have child protection concerns, and providing it is safe to do so, tell the family: What you are concerned about, who you will share the information with, what is likely to happen next
- If you are concerned about the child's safety or wellbeing and it is not appropriate to discuss this with the family because you don't feel safe or you are concerned about child sexual abuse or you are concerned about domestic abuse and the perpetrator was present or you feel that raising concerns could compromise the child's safety and wellbeing, or a combination of these, then do not discuss these with parents. On return to school report these to a DSL immediately.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns

If you have safeguarding or child protection concerns, report these to a DSL immediately on return to school.

Visits are not expected to last more than 20 minutes and should conclude when mutually accepted by both parties.

Resources required

Visiting staff members will take an information pack with them when visiting a child and their parents in their home. This would usually contain photographs of staff and the kinds of activities the children will be doing inside and outside of the school, as well as the standard forms that would need to be filled in by the parents. Either the teacher or the Teaching Assistant will play / read stories to the child and the other adult will engage with the parent / carer.

Staff should also take a mobile phone for safety reasons, a camera to take a photograph of the child (written consent from parents is needed before a photograph is taken) and some small toys and books for the child to play with if needed.

Sharing Information

Staff will introduce themselves and explain who all members of the EYFS are and their job role. They will explain the purpose of the visit, which is to familiarise the family with APS and for school staff to learn more about the child and family.

Familiarising the family with the school

- Timetable of school day / pick up and drop off
- Uniform, PE kit, outdoor clothes
- Drinks, snacks and lunch
- Curriculum, including phonics, reading books, play.
- Communication – ParentPay, Scholarpack, newsletters, Class Dojo, website, Parents Evening,
- school reports and Learning Journals.
- Attendance – reporting sickness, holidays

Opportunities for school to know more about the child and family:

- Family members and structure
- Nursery / Pre-School experience
- Health, including allergies and any medication
- SEN and involvement of any outside agencies, e.g. speech therapist
- Interests, likes and dislikes
- Emotional development, including how they react to situations, people, any worries or concerns
- Physical development, including dressing/undressing, use of cutlery, toilet independence.
- Safeguarding – who to collect from school, family circumstances

Following Home Visits

- Return to school when you have completed the visits and sign back in, letting the office staff know you have returned.
- Record and share and relevant notes
- Follow up any safeguarding or child protection concerns with DSLs
- Follow up any actions agreed and next steps
- Share information in school as appropriate and with appropriate agencies if necessary.

Appendix 1 Home Visit Risk Assessment

Home Visit Risk Assessment					
Reason for home visit:	EYFS	Welfare	Attendance	Date:	Mobile number:
Description of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for EYFS, liaise with school office for timetable and list of addresses that are attached for welfare of attendance home visits, add details for contacts and reason for visiting 					
List potential Hazards	People	Severity of harm	Risk level	Controls	
What could cause harm?	Who might be harmed?	How badly could they be harmed?	High Medium Low	What controls are currently in place?	
Aggressive or violent parents/child/family member	Members of staff undertaking the home visit.	Injury or illness	High	Home visiting policy adhered to. Mobile phone taken and number recorded on risk assessment. 2 person visit for EYFS. Family information reviewed before visit-check the source. Time of visit recorded and addresses of homes noted on attached schedule. Agreed time for visit to end and check in with office staff member at the end of the visit. If staff haven't returned / checked in, phone call to mobile to check status. If contact is not made and concerns remain, senior staff notified and liaison with police as necessary.	
Signed by SLT / DSL				Date:	

*Example in red to be deleted

Appendix 2 Information Shared/Collected Prior to a Home Visit

Information sharing and collecting - New to EYFS

Here is a summary of the information shared with and collected from parents/carers prior to a home visit/joining Nursery and Reception (September intake).

Offer Pack (To be shared with parents/carers in May):

- Offer letter
- Medical form
- Emergency contact form
- Application form
- Questionnaire
- Term dates
- Invite to welcome talk
- Invite to stay and play sessions (new to school only)

Welcome Pack (To be collected in person at welcome talk or posted in July):

- APS storybook
- All about me form
- Reading for pleasure information
- STARS information
- Start dates for September
- Information and date of home visit
- EYPP form

Home visit (or school visit mid-year):

- Complete 'Parent Contribution' form
- Use home visit prompt sheet to guide conversation and information collection
- Collect EYPP, medical and emergency contact forms

Appendix 3 Home Visit Prompts for Discussion

Home Visit Prompts and Information Collection

Prior to visit:

- read home visit policy, pupil application form and questionnaire completed by parent/carer- make a note of any questions arising?

During visit:

- Collect application form if this has not already been returned to school.
- Collect emergency contact form and medical form or ask for it to be handed in on first day at school. Give a spare form if necessary.
- Complete 'Parent Contribution' form – please remember to check: pronunciation of child's name and list who can collect at home time.
- Explain Drop off/collection routines.
- Discuss school uniform / jewellery policy.
- Share independence expectations (toileting, recognising their belongings, feeding themselves).
- Discuss snack time and cool milk application (leaflets available).
- Collect EYPP form.
- Discuss book bags and story/reading book systems.
- Promote Reading for Pleasure.
- Explain use of phonics packs and importance of reading at home (Reception)
- Ask for spare clothes (own bag for Nursery, Reception use school spares)
- Remind parents about bringing a labelled water bottle to school.
- Direct to School website - Weekly overview, key vocabulary, book recommendations, lunch menu etc.
- Reminder: Send photo of favourite book
- Share e-mail address for communication
- With parent/carer permission take a photo of the child and their family.

After visit:

- Record information on the home visit spreadsheet.
- File 'Parent Contribution' sheet in child's Learning Journal.
- Display family photographs to support transition.

Starting in Nursery

Favourite Things	
My favourite toy is...	
My favourite fruit is...	
My interests are...	
Things that I don't like...	



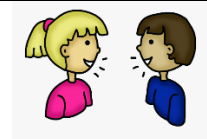
Things that I might need help with	
I might need some extra help with...	




My family	
I live with...	
At home we speak...	



Communicating	
I can speak...	
Previous Settings	
I attended...	



Home time		
I can be collected from school by...		

Medical / Allergies/ Food Requirements		

Any other comments		