



CORNWALL EDUCATION
LEARNING TRUST

CELT Home Visit Protocol

Overarching Principles

A home visit is a visit that requires member(s) of staff to enter the home of a parent or carer.

The aims of this document are:

- to set out guidance to staff making official visits to the homes of referred and registered pupils
- to ensure the personal safety of staff on home visits

The aim of a home visit is:

To establish a partnership between the parent or carer and staff so that all parties share their knowledge about the child to enable the individual needs of the child to be met.

To develop and strengthen relationships with the parent or carer for the best interests of the child.

Home visits may be used (not an exhaustive list);

- Transitional visit
- Attendance visit
- Students are refusing to come into school
- When students are being educated at home
- When all other means of contact with a family has failed
- To meet with parents/carers to discuss an issue regarding their child where it is in the best interest of the child to have that discussion in their own home rather than at school or where it would be difficult for a parents/carers to attend school for a meeting and information needs to be shared in a face to face meeting in a timely manner.
- 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 collect from or drop a child off at home where there are concerns for a child's welfare if they travelled by other means.
- To drop off or collect work for a child when they are completing school work at home e.g. following a fixed term suspension or medical 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.

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.
- 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

The aim of the home visit policy procedure is to ensure good working practice and to provide guidelines in reducing risks to members of staff when undertaking home visits. The procedures in this document are to be read and implemented by all CELT staff.

All home visits conducted by staff must be authorised by the safeguarding lead or a member of senior leadership team prior to the visit taking place.

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 emergency safeguarding visits.

Prior to the home visit:

- Be familiar with the school's policy and procedure for home visits.
- Be clear about the purpose of the visit. Make sure that a home visit is really necessary. (If possible and/or practical, arrange for parents/carers to come into the school)
- Seek confirmation that the home visit is approved by the Safeguarding lead or senior leader. Discuss with the Safeguarding Lead or senior leader whether it is deemed appropriate for the visit to be made in pairs or alone.
- Make sure you are well informed about the family and are aware of personal circumstances.
- Consider who you need to see, e.g. parents/carers, with or without the child. Develop a plan between those staff who are attending - what is going to be discussed, how this is going to be delivered and what you would like to be achieved?
- Wherever possible make an appointment to establish a time convenient to the family and to ensure that everyone you want to see will be present. Either make a phone call or send a letter.
- Driver/s are to provide the necessary documents to the school office –insurance certificate, evidencing that there is the appropriate business insurance cover for the vehicle being used to transport staff to and from the visit.
- Where advice is communicated from any source which suggests caution or a reason not to conduct a home visit, then this advice must be given full consideration.
- Ensure the number of a "buddy", i.e. a member of staff based at school who is accessible and available throughout the duration of the visit, is stored into your telephone and agree a code word to indicate you are in trouble and need help i.e. "Can you tell Mr Jones I will be late for his appointment today?"
- Before staff leave to go on a home visit they must inform the school office, and leave the following information
 - time leaving school
 - car registration number
 - mobile phone numbers of the staff conducting the home visit
 - the address of the home visit
 - whom you are expecting to see
 - the time you are expected to arrive and leave the property,
 - the time you are expected to return to school

- The safety of school staff is very important. Staff should not take risks. If they feel insecure they should not go on a home visit. It is the staff's responsibility to voice their concerns to their line manager.

During the visit

- Park in a well lit area and in a position where you do not need to reverse on leaving.
- Introduce yourself, have identification available and explain again the purpose of the visit.
- Do not enter the premises unless invited in by a responsible adult.
- Do not enter the premises if invited to do so by a child that is on the premises unsupervised by a responsible adult.
- Only speak to an adult with parental responsibility or another responsible adult whom a parent/carer has delegated to be there in their absence and they have given us permission to speak to about the student for whom we are making the home visit.
- 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.
- Do not enter a child's/young person's bedroom.
- If you are concerned that a child/young person is in the home inappropriately alone/unsupervised contact the schools safeguarding team to discuss your observations or to seek immediate advice from them if you are uncertain whether the child is alone/unsupervised. If appropriate the Safeguarding Lead will make a referral to social care.
- If you feel that a child/young person is in immediate danger contact emergency services 999.
- Explain that you may need to take notes during the meeting. Do not promise not to relay information to school. Remember that under the child protection procedures you must report disclosures or suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Remember you are a guest in someone's home: show respect and courtesy at all times, be sensitive to the culture, religion etc of the home.
- Be professional; give professional advice and information rather than personal opinions. Be sympathetic, but remain neutral. Don't get personally involved. Be discreet but assertive about the direction of the conversation; do not gossip about the school or staff.
- Keep to the point.
- If you are asked any questions that you cannot answer, either find out and report back to the parent/carer or refer the parent or carer to a senior member of staff.
- If the situation starts to become unmanageable (i.e. verbal or physical aggression) call the meeting to an end and leave the property. If you are unable to do this safely without aggravating the situation, call your buddy using the code word to summon help. In this case the buddy should make a 999 call to the police.
- Consider personal safety at all times during the visit; do not put yourself in danger (see Appendix 1, personal safety tips)

Transportation of children:

- If a child or children is/are being collected to bring them to school, there must be two members of staff present.
- If a private car is being used the child/ren must sit in the back of the vehicle.
- Staff must ensure that they have the appropriate equipment needed to transport children safely. N.B. legal requirements state that children must use a car seat until they are 12 years old or 135cm tall, whichever comes first.

If you arrive for a home visit and no one is home:

- Leave a note with the date and time you were there, the school phone number and a time that you can be reached to set up a new appointment.
- Return to the school and try to call the parent.
- It is the responsibility of the staff due to visit to ensure that parents are contacted immediately if they are unable to keep to the scheduled appointment. If the home visitor cancels a home visit, due to illness or otherwise, it must be reconvened at a later date.

In the event of an incident:

- If there is an incident while at the home address, staff should assess the situation and make a decision on the best course of action to keep themselves safe (see Appendix 1 for tips) Depending on the nature of the incident it may be necessary for staff to contact their buddy to get help or contact the emergency services on 999 or 101.
- On return to the office after an incident, the staff member must contact their line manager, inform them of the incident and complete an incident debrief, making sure that the incident is factually recorded on CPOMS. All incidents must be shared with the Headteacher by the end of the working day.

After the home visit:

- If you are not returning directly to school, telephone the school after the visit to say you have left the home visit
- If the staff member/s do not return to school within the allotted time, and have not contacted the school to tell them why they are going to be late, then the allocated buddy must make all reasonable attempts to contact each staff member. If contact cannot be established, a senior leader must be informed immediately and consideration must be given to contacting the police.
 - A senior leader will take the following steps, as required, in the event of staff not returning: attempt to contact the family via a landline and speak to visiting staff, drive past the property to check if the vehicle is there, look for signs of an incident, and/or contact the police to report the individuals missing.
- After every visit, it is essential that staff write a short report on every visit they make on CPOMS, and record any follow up actions undertaken.
- Any safeguarding concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with the Safeguarding team on arrival back to school.
- At school do not discuss individual home visits with staff who are not involved with those particular children.

Appendix 1 - Expected Staff Behaviour

- Remain professional at all times
- Have specific goals or objectives for each visit
- Help parents become more independent
- Keep language appropriate
- Respect cultural and ethnic values

Personal safety during a home visit:

- Keep your car keys and mobile phone in a pocket or on your person; in case of an emergency, you need to be able to exit and/or call for help quickly
- Survey the premises for exits and ways out in an emergency
- If the person you are visiting locks the front door, ask them to leave the key in the lock
- Be wary of trip hazards that are both external and internal, such as steps, lifted floor coverings, electrical wires
- If there are dogs or other pets which concern you, ask that they be put away in a locked kennel or room
- Do not wear expensive jewellery
- Limit the amount of cash you carry

Travel safety tips when conducting a home visit:

- If parking in a private driveway, reverse park if you are able to do so, so that you can simply drive out
- In a cul-de-sac, park in the direction of the cul-de-sac exit
- Approach your car with your keys easily available or in your hand
- Check the car interior before entering
- Hide any bags or personal/work items so that they are not viewable
- Avoid parking beside vans/trucks
- Park in well-lit areas and avoid parking in isolated areas
- If staff attend as a pair wait outside the property until all staff involved have arrived

Tips to consider if you are faced with aggression during a home visit:

- Never enter a house if there are raised voices or signs of aggression coming from within – call the police
- Don't enter a home with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Don't enter a home with someone who is inappropriately dressed
- If an aggressive incident occurs, remember to remain as calm as possible, and speak slowly and calmly
- Stay in communal and neutral rooms such as a living room; avoid moving into bedrooms or kitchens
- Keep space between yourself and the aggressor, and try to keep a barrier (e.g. table) between you where possible
- Slowly move towards an exit
- Try not to walk backwards as you risk tripping over
- At the earliest opportunity call the Police, and call your buddy to report the incident
- Keep your distance, never touch or turn your back on someone who is angry.