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1. Introduction

Refer to COVID 19 Secure procedures in addition to this policy.

This guide is for Richard Barnes Academy teachers and support staff whose programs include visiting the homes of children and their families. It will provide practical advice on preparing for the visit, appropriate procedures for implementing and completing the visit, as well as guidelines for post visit practices.

Also included are safety tips, general suggestions, a sample letter introducing parents to teachers, sample forms for documenting visits.

1.1 Children as Individuals

Each child is a unique individual. Each brings a different life story to the Academy setting. Growing up as a member of a family and a community with unique ways of understanding the world creates an individual pattern and pace of development. It helps to determine the child's views and attitudes.

In order to plan learning experiences that will meet each individual child's needs, it is important to find out as much as possible about the child, and to build on this often by:

- Taking account of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Fostering equal opportunities.
- Collaborating with other agencies.
- Supporting transitions.
- Working together with home and families.

1.2 Working together with home and families.

Parents are children's prime educators in their earliest years and they continue to play a major role in their young child's learning when they enter the primary/secondary/residential setting.

Staff should value the role of parents in children's learning and work to create a genuine partnership with them. When staff and parents work together to support children's learning, it can have significant positive effects on the way in which children value themselves and those around them.

There are many ethical issues to be addressed in home visiting, not least being the need to ensure the safety of staff going into less desirable areas of a city. It is also important to consider the selection of staff when making home visits; for example, it may not be appropriate to send a male teacher into the home of a Muslim mother.



All of this has to be thought through and matters of culture, respect and confidentiality have to be addressed.

1.3 Why make home visits?

Staff make home visits to better meet the needs of the child and family. In promoting a partnership between parents and teachers, home visits provide the means for effective team problem-solving, observing children in their home environment, and encouraging parent involvement. While providing teaching services for the child, home visits may also lend distressed parents often much needed support to foster positive parenting. Effective home visiting furthers the mental, emotional, and physical health and development of the child by serving the whole family.

2. The Initial Visit

2.1 Staff Preparation

- Home visits may be conducted weekly after analysis of attendance data.
- Home visits must be conducted in the presence of parents or legal guardian.
- Contact parents/Carer/guardian in advance by phone and letter.
- For parents who cannot commit to a date due to an irregular schedule, establish and record a time you will contact to them or when they have agreed to contact you to set a specific date and time to ensure completion of the required visit.
- Ensure that the parents are aware of whom the focus of the home visit is on.
- Include purpose of visit.
- Schedule at family's convenience as much as possible.
- Set time limit (e.g., 4:30 – 5:30).

Review the child's records, family history, and cultural background.

- Complete or review a home visit risk assessment and share with your line manager.
- Try to ensure that you have learnt as much about the family as possible from the relevant staff involved (including Safer Schools Officers) with the young person.
- Learn names of family members.
- Research SEN issues.

Develop a tentative plan for a visit:

- Be flexible.
- Schedule 45 to 60 minutes for each home visit.
- Plan the travel time and sequence of visits.



- Dress appropriately.
- Gather equipment, papers, pamphlets, etc.
- Be sure of location, research or carry a map of the area.
- Leave schedule of home visits and contact information with office personnel and line manager.

3. Arrival

3.1 Set the Tone.

- Be punctual to your home visits.
- Notify the school that you have arrived at your destination.
- If an appropriate adult, or the person you have arranged to meet, is not available, terminate the visit and reschedule.
- Introduce self and staff.
- Always follow the parent/learner into the home. Do not go into the home first; they may try to block you in, and you do not know who is already there.
- Establish a social connection (e.g. through small talk).
- Sit near the door/exit. Avoid letting the parent/learner sit between you and the door.
- Include other family members in the conversation.
- Modify the environment (babies crying, TV, other distractions).
- Settle at a work place (i.e. the kitchen or living room – ask for suggestions).
- Remember to use your instincts, stay calm, and act confidently.

3.2 During the Visit

- Review the purpose of the visit.
- Establish goals; discover how the programme and/or staff member can serve the family.
- Whether the child is present or not include information that may be useful to the parent's self-improvement, behaviour management, and child development.
- Discuss the direction of the visit with the parent/carer.
- Give programme overview, explain and interpret.
- Elicit feedback from parents/carers regarding the child's interests, concerns, and progress in the programme, and at home: "Tell me about your child," or "What does your child like best about school?"
- Share information about community resources.

- Observe the family interaction in its cultural context.
- Reinforce positive parenting.
- Discuss a variety of ways parents can be involved.



- Be respectful of parents' literacy but do not assume they are capable/incapable of reading/writing.
- Avoid being left alone with young people for extended periods of time. Children and young people may make allegations of abuse against staff for reasons other than they have been abused by them. This most commonly occurs when they wish to draw attention to abuse or distress experienced elsewhere, either inside or outside the home, and therefore allegations will always be taken seriously.

3.3 Containing Aggression.

It is important, even if someone is trying to provoke you, not to respond in kind. Meeting aggression leads to confrontation and someone could get hurt.

Stay calm and speak slowly and clearly. Do not argue, be patronizing or try to outsmart the person verbally. Breathe slowly to control your own tension.

Avoid body language which may be misinterpreted, such as looking down on the aggressor; hands on hips; folded arms; any physical contact. Keep your distance.

Talk through the problem; suggest going to see a colleague; suggest a walk or some fresh air, allow aggression to be diverted against inanimate objects, such as banging the table.

Compromise - offer the aggressor a way out of the situation.

If you can't deflect or defuse the situation, get away. Make an excuse to leave, e.g. remember an urgent appointment.

Trust your instincts and do not underestimate the situation. Things can get out of control very quickly. Be prepared!

Whilst talking, assess possible ways you can escape if the situation worsens.

Never turn your back, if you are trying to get away, move gradually backwards.
Contact the Police when physical abuse/assault has occurred.

4. Concluding the Visit

4.1 Summary

- Summarise the content of the visit.
- Provide information about future parent activities.



- Highlight school activities, events,
- Invite parents to get involved.
- Discuss next visit.
- Make yourself available for phone calls and questions.
- Plan the next home visit, if appropriate.
- Make a closure and good-bye.
- Contact the school to let them know that you have exited the home and are safe.

4.2 Post Visit

- Document visit (see Appendix D for sample forms)
- Evaluation: modify education plan according to visit finding(s).
- Process visit accessing support from peers and supervisors.
- Follow through on referrals, and document outcomes.
- Update home visit risk assessment, if necessary.

5. Cancelled Visits

If a home visit cannot be conducted due to a change in the parents' schedule, there must be at least 3 attempts made by the home visitor to try to reschedule.

If you show up for a home visit and no one is home:

- Leave a note with the date and time you were there, the school's phone number, and a time that you could be reached to set up a new appointment.
- Return to the school and try to call the parent.
- If you are unable to locate the parent at that time, send a note home with the child on the next school day, asking the parent to contact you for a time that the visit could be rescheduled.
- It is the home visitor's responsibility to ensure that parents are contacted immediately if unable to keep the scheduled appointment. If the home visitor cancels a home visit (due to illness or otherwise) the meeting must be rescheduled.

6. Your Safety

Don't be a target.



- Complete or review a home visit risk assessment and share with line manager (see Appendix B).
- Share your contact information with school offices / line manager.
- Notify school prior to entering a home visit and on exiting a home visit.
- Stay alert.
- Trust your instincts.
- Dress appropriately, leaving jewellery at home.
- Travel in pairs when possible.
- Remove yourself from dangerous situations.
- Leave purse/bag at office or in car.
- Carry necessary cash, keys, and identification.
- Survey the neighbourhood (identify safe areas, i.e., restaurants, telephones, and police stations).
- Consider a neutral location if visit cannot be made safely at home (i.e., library, restaurants).
- Ask family members to come out to meet you if you feel uncomfortable with the area.
- Ask family to secure pets before arrival.

7. Suggestions

DO:

- Be a good listener.
- Have specific goals or objectives for each visit.
- Realise the limitations of your role.
- Help parents become more independent.
- Keep language appropriate.
- Remember that small improvements lead to big ones.
- Be yourself.
- Be confident.
- Respect cultural and ethnic values.
- Monitor your own behaviour – the parent is observing you.

DON'T:

- Impose values
- Bring visitors without the parent's/guardian's permission.
- Socialise excessively at the beginning of the visit.
- Exclude other family members from the visit.
- Talk about families in public.
- Be the centre of attention.



- Expect perfection from the parent.
- Ask the parent to do something you would not do.

8. Communications

- All post-visit documentation (if not of a child protection nature) is to be uploaded to SIMS and attached to the learners file, and recorded in the learner Events History, where appropriate.
- Issues of a child protection nature are to be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Person, who will then implement the Academy's Child Protection procedures if necessary.
- Contact with other agencies on issues relating to home visit findings must be relayed through the correct channels and recorded in the learner's communication log.



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Appendices

Appendix A

Dear.....,

RE: (Childs Name)

Onat, we would like to visit you and in your home. Our visit will last about thirty minutes.

During our visit, we would like discuss.....

Please let us know if this date and time are convenient for you by checking the appropriate box below, and returning the form with your child. We look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,



Tear or cut along line

HOME VISIT

- YES. This date and time are convenient.
- NO. This date and time are inconvenient.



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Child's name:.....

Purpose of visit:.....

Date:.....


Appendix B (Home Visit Risk Assessment)

Family Name	Address	Contact Details	
Date of visit	Time of visit	Name of staff (s) making visits	
Risk assessment	By Whom:		
		Yes	No
Have any risk been identified by any other agency?			
Are the entrances /exits to the property easily accessible?			
Are there any dangers/hazards associated with the property?			
Are you aware of any intimidating /threatening parents, learners, relatives or friends living at or likely to visit the property?			
Are there pets in the household, are they threatening?			
Are you confident all safety measures are in place?			
Do you think contact should be made outside of the home?			
Areas of concern			
Action (s) to eliminate/reduce risk?			By whom?
Date	Manager's signature		
Date of review			



Purpose of Outreach

Child's special interests	
Resource provision	
School/parent activities	
Expected outcome	

Summary of Home Visit

Child's name: date:	
Parent's name: home visitor:	
Purpose of contact:	
Parent interested in: materials/resources	
Evaluations: special interests/follow-up:	

No one at home — Note left <input type="checkbox"/>	Visit completed <input type="checkbox"/>
Purpose achieved <input type="checkbox"/>	Purpose not achieved <input type="checkbox"/>



Appendix C (Home Visit Schedule Report)

Child's name:	
Home visitor:	
Date:	
Time:	
Rescheduled for:	
Date:	
Time:	
Visit cycle:	
Visit scheduled? Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Visit completed? Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Length of visit:	
Follow through:	
Staff comments:	
Parent comments:	
Parent signature:	