

EARLSMEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

HOME VISITS & LONE WORKING POLICY



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Mission Statement

At Earlsmead Primary School we encourage all members of our school community to strive to be the best they can be and develop new skills that empower them for life-long learning in order to become confident, valuable members of society.

We create an inclusive, supportive, safe and challenging environment where all contributions are valued.

Learning is motivating and independence is encouraged hence all become reflective, self-learning team members with a positive sense of wellbeing and a love of learning.

Our Vision

Working in partnership with children, parents, staff and Governors as a community we will achieve **Success for All** through:

Securing resilience

Understanding values and respecting others

Committing to our learning

Community involvement

Equality for all

Striving to do our very best

Setting high expectations

Aim

This policy is designed to protect the safety of all school staff.

Lone working

For the purposes of this policy, lone working will be defined as a situation where staff are engaged in work (either outdoors or indoors) where there are no other people who could reasonably be expected to come to their immediate aid in the event of an incident or emergency.

Within Earlsmead School, there are various work activities that may result in staff members working alone; for example:

1. Staff that are required to work alone for all or most of the time, such as cleaning staff working at night or early morning.
2. Staff staying on to finish urgent work after others have left, or those who regularly work late or start early, before anyone else gets into the building.
3. Staff who are key-holders or who are left to turn out the lights, set the alarm and lock up the premises after everyone else has gone home.
4. Peripatetic workers whose work involves travelling or home visits to service users.
5. Staff on home visits alone e.g. Parent Support Advisor or Nursery Staff

Home Visits

Home visits are not a work activity which should be completed alone. **All home visits will always take place with staff in pairs.** Policy and procedures must be consistently applied by all staff.

Rationale for carrying out home visits

Home visits may be necessary for a variety of reasons, including:

- Attendance
- Safeguarding or health and wellbeing checks
- Inducting new pupils and families to the school. This is the most common reason for a home visit.

The insights that staff have gained into each child's home and background greatly helps them to assess their level of need in school and prepare for the child's entry into the setting. Another major benefit is that the home visits are the start or the continued building of the relationship with parents which is vital if we are to be successful in providing for the needs of the child. It also shows parents that the school respects them and wants to share their knowledge, which puts the relationship on a more equal footing.

Meeting each child in his or her home environment has proved invaluable in:

- Gathering information that will enable the children to settle into Nursery and Reception classes.
- Establishing positive links with families, especially those of vulnerable pupils.

For parents and children, a visit gives them the opportunity to meet the teacher and staff in a safe environment, where they feel confident and at ease.

For teachers and support staff, a visit provides the opportunity to:

- establish early, positive contact;
- see children in their own familiar settings;
- meet other family members, people and pets who are important to the children;
- understand the problems that children might encounter at school, and also to appreciate the wealth of learning that goes on in the home.

This all helps to get a fuller picture of the children. Professionals can gain much from observing a child where he or she feels settled and in control.

Risk Assessments

It is the responsibility of the Trust Operations Manager together with the Headteacher to ensure that an annual Health and Safety and Risk Assessment is undertaken and that members of staff are aware of the content of this, as well as the risks of Lone Working. The risk assessment will take into account the type of tasks undertaken, the environment, health and safety instruction and training received in addition to the individual's medical history.

Hazards identified will be evaluated by the Health and Safety Co-ordinator for the likelihood of the hazard causing harm. Measures will be introduced if the assessment shows that existing precautions are inadequate to eliminate or adequately control the hazard. The risk assessment will be subject to review to ensure it is relevant and current to the workings of the school.

Contractors will be given the opportunity by the Health and Safety Co-ordinator to complete a Lone Working Risk Assessment as necessary and receive the appropriate Health and Safety information.

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.

Protocol

Staff should seek the permission of the Headteacher to work alone in the building outside of normal school hours. The experience and training of staff and the activities to be undertaken will be taken into consideration before allowing lone working. Whenever possible it is recommended that staff work with a colleague and ensure that they are aware if they are to be in a lone working situation, for example if a colleague had previously been on site but had subsequently left. Staff should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness.

Staff Responsibilities:

Staff members have a duty of care for themselves and anyone else who could be affected by their actions. Therefore, they have a responsibility to ensure that they:

- Are aware and follow all policies or procedures.
- Always plan ahead.
- Are fully aware of the risks when working alone.
- Do not put themselves in potential danger.
- Ensure that they have made themselves aware of the nearest place of safety.
- Be aware of the on-site security procedures.
- Ensure that access is available to personal alarms/mobile phones or some form of personal communication.

Strategies/Guidelines for Lone Working:

All lone working staff should establish their own checking in and out system with family, friends or work colleagues. It is advised that lone workers keep a mobile phone with them and a school wireless phone (in the event of own mobile losing signal) in case of an emergency. Staff completing home visits as a Lone Worker should ensure that someone is aware of the address/family to be visited.

Site security must be maintained at all times, however staff should not enter the school premises if there are signs of intruders but are advised to immediately call the police. Staff must not put themselves in danger by challenging intruders or vandals.

Contractors are responsible for assessing their own risk and for providing their own first aid kit, suitable for treating minor injuries.

Lone workers should not undertake activities that involve the handling of money (such as being handed dinner/trip money in the family home). They should not undertake activities that involve working at height or any task that has been identified as medium risk (such as moving heavy or unstable objects). They should not undertake any activities that are identified as high risk (such as entering the home where suspected or known violence, drug or alcohol misuse has taken place) or which is potentially hazardous, given their own level of experience and the nature of the task. Staff working at height in an isolated building must follow appropriate Working at Height procedures.

It is the responsibility of all school personnel and contractors to be aware of and to adhere to the lone working procedures and to report any difficulties, failure of equipment or general concerns on health and safety to the Health and Safety Co-ordinator. If members of staff fail to follow procedures designed to protect their safety, this could result in a disciplinary matter as they will have contributed to their injury and any compensation claims for damages or unfair dismissal may be reduced accordingly.

Health & Safety During Lone Working

During lone working, staff are still expected to sign in and out of our digital system.

In the event of a fire, lone workers should evacuate and raise the alarm (possibly through using a mobile phone). Staff must familiarise themselves with the nearest fire exits and ensure all fire doors are unlocked (not with a master key) and unobstructed before starting work.

The onset of sudden illness or incapacity is a significant hazard for those working alone. Individuals with medical conditions that may cause sudden incapacity or unconsciousness (e.g., unstable diabetes or epilepsy) should not work alone. Staff must inform the Headteacher or Health and Safety Lead of any relevant medical conditions. A "buddy system" must be established where a vulnerable lone worker is able to contact a nominated person (colleague or family) at pre-agreed intervals. In the event of feeling unwell, staff should use their mobile phone to contact a family member, the Headteacher, or emergency services immediately. Lone workers must have access to a standard first aid kit (available in the admin office, classrooms and the staffroom) and be trained in basic first aid where risk assessments deem it necessary.

To maintain safety, the following tasks are strictly prohibited for lone workers:

- Working at height (e.g., using ladders or putting up displays).
- Manual handling of heavy, bulky, or unstable items.
- Working with hazardous machinery or substances.
- Handling large amounts of cash.

External doors should be kept locked to prevent unauthorised access. If there are signs of a forced entry, staff must not enter the building and should contact the Police immediately. Staff should not arrange meetings with parents or the public while lone working; these should occur during normal occupancy hours.

Strategies/Guidelines for Staff carrying out home visits:

The structure of EYFS home visits

The class teacher and teaching assistant should make each visit together. As well as the obvious safety implications, this allows one to talk to the child's parents and the other to focus on the child. This can be the beginning of the relationship between the teacher and the child, especially as staff have been invited into the child's home. It also means that the parent has focused time with the Teacher or Teaching Assistant.

Between 15 and 30 minutes is the standard period of time devoted to each home visit. Visits take place during the term before children are due to start attending Nursery or Reception.

Parents are always telephoned in advance to confirm the appointment. 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.

Equipment Needed for Home Visits

Visiting staff members will take an information pack with them when visiting a pupil 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.

Before the Visit

- Make appointments in advance and offer alternative dates/times.
- Where possible, all home visits should be carried out during normal working hours (9.00am – 5.00pm) with due regard to the daylight hours.
- 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 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.
- Obtain information about the location of the home visit. For example, does the area have a reputation for being unsafe, isolated or poorly lit?
- Discuss strategies to adopt when working with a potentially challenging Parent/Carer/Family with your SLT.
- 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

- Carry with you and show the parent some form of 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.
- Show respect for Parents/Carers as equal partners.
- Remember you are a guest who has been invited into the family's home. You may ask people for information but they are under no legal obligation to give it to you. They can also ask you to leave at any time.
- 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.
- They 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: - 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 - 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
 - You are concerned about child sexual abuse
 - You are concerned about domestic abuse and the perpetrator was present
 - You feel that raising concerns could compromise the child's safety and wellbeing**YOU MUST SEEK ADVICE URGENTLY, AFTER LEAVING THE FAMILY HOME.** You must discuss the situation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Headteacher.

After the visit:

- Return to school when you have completed the visits and sign back in, also letting the office staff know you have returned.

Things to think about after a home visit:

- Recording any information.
- Following up any safeguarding or child protection concerns.
- Actions agreed and next steps.
- Sharing information with appropriate agencies.
- Talk to other professionals who may already have had contact or involvement with the family.

Earlsmead Primary School respects the right of the employee, under the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, to refuse to carry out work where there is a serious and imminent risk of danger. Staff should be proactive in bringing to the attention of the Headteacher any aspect of work-related risks.

This policy will be regularly reviewed and amended as necessary. Following any incident a thorough investigation will be carried out and its findings used to inform change to procedures and working practices.

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR HOME VISITS – NURSERY / RECEPTION

Risk Assessment For _____ Carried out _____ Term 20 _____

Issue	How to manage it
List significant hazards which may result in serious harm or affect several people.	What procedures will we have? (Control measures)
Visiting an unknown house and family – member of staff being harmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit in pairs and stay together. • Both have a mobile phone, switched on. • 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. • Have a code word that either staff member can say if they feel uncomfortable and want to leave. • Wear clothes and shoes that do not hinder movement or your ability to run in case of emergency. • Sit near to a door where possible. • Try not to turn your back on the adults. • Take minimum personal belongings and keep close to you
No adult present at the property on arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a child answers the door, ask them to call their mum or dad. Do not enter unless an adult comes to the door. • If no adult comes, tell the child you will come back another time. • Call the school and speak to the DSL. If the DSL is unavailable, speak to the police for advice.
Area of the property is unsafe - – member of staff / property getting injured / damaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit in pairs and stay together. • 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. • Don't leave any valuables in the car or items in view • Home visits will be carried out during normal working hours (9.00am – 5.00pm) with due regard to the daylight hours. • Call office when you arrive / leave the area. If the office do not hear at the expected time, they must call both mobiles and make contact. Code word to be used if necessary. If no contact is made, SLT to be alerted immediately.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If staff feel anxious upon arriving at a home visit location and feel their 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 SLT. • 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.
Aggressive or violent parent / carer / family member / child - member of staff getting injured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit in pairs and stay together. • Both have a mobile phone, switched on. • 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. • 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. • Confrontation should always be avoided. At the first sign of potential threat you should make a swift exit from the home • Have a code word that either staff member can say if they feel uncomfortable and want to leave. • Report back to SLT and police if necessary.
Attack by dog / animal – member of staff getting bitten / injured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not pet the animal. • Ask family to put the animal in another room.

Headteacher _____ Date _____

Staff on home visit - 1. _____ Date _____

- 2. _____ Date _____