

Home Visiting and Personal Safety

Introduction

In many and varied instances Epina School extends the courtesy of home visits to parent/carers. The provision of home visiting is accommodated on a needs-led basis and only when it would serve in the best interests of the student concerned to do so. Home visits are conducted by school to achieve the following objectives:

- Extending outreach support to students and families at times of difficulty;
- Completing initial assessments to inform the school admission process;
- Providing home additional support and home tuition for some students.

The safety of staff at Epina School's paramount concern when accommodating home visits to the homes of our students and their parent/carers. Under no circumstances will senior management sanction a home visit where it is known, or there is considered to be unacceptable risk to staff. The guidance below is intended to support and advise staff responsible for conducting home visits. It designed to ensure that staff plan meticulously for and take all necessary precautions to safeguard safe and productive home visits.

Home Visiting Procedure

Preliminary planning:

Before carrying out a home visit, staff should:

- Obtain as much relevant information as is considered necessary for the purpose of the planned visit. (see student information/speak with Head Teacher / SLT).
- Establish who will be in the home at the time when making appointment for visit.
- Ensure that the purpose of the visit and intended outcomes are clearly communicated and understood by all concerned.
- Check address, obtain clear directions and plan route.
- Notify the Head Teacher / SLT of the visit and acquire consent.
- Ensure they have appropriate identification.
- Ensure that they have working, fully charged mobile phone.

- Add appointment to the school calendar including pupil name and expected return time (eg XX – home visit to XX – expected return to school at 11.30am).
- Sign out of school on the electronic staff signing in / out system (“school business”).
- Agree ‘coded message’ with reception staff in event of a hazardous situation – see Personal Safety Guidelines for more information.

On Arrival:

On arrival at parent/carers home staff should:

- Check they have the correct address.
- Contact admin to inform of their arrival and the commencement of visit.
- Show appropriate identification
- Request to be introduced to other people present if any additional presence is not anticipated.
- Request that any dogs present be suitably contained during the course of the visit, if desirable.

During the visit:

During the home visit staff should:

- Keep the mobile phone switched on at all times.
- Inform the parent/carers of the anticipated ‘time allocation’ for the meeting and your ensuing attendance at a hypothetical meeting that requires your punctual attendance.
- Make an excuse to LEAVE if they feel in any way that their personal safety maybe compromised.
- Politely leave if anyone present appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or appears agitated.
- Play for time if put ‘on the spot’ and avoid making rash decisions or promises in response to unrealistic requests or serious complaining about the service – always defer until SLT can be consulted.

Post-visit

Post-visit staff should:

- Notify admin by mobile phone immediately following the visit your expected return time to school. (see additional considerations should you plan to make successive home visits)

On return to school staff should:

- Sign back into school on the electronic sign in / out system.
- Record the content/details as per agreed school procedures.
- Make a separate written record should they have identified any hazards/risks and/or experienced/perceived any distress or threat.
- Ensure that the Head Teacher is made aware of any concerns as soon as is possible.

Post-Visit Senior Action:

- Ensure that records of home visits maintained.
- Ensure that identified risks/hazards/difficulties experienced by staff making home visits are appropriately discussed and recorded where deemed necessary.
- Ensure that serious concerns result in corrective action and make a record of their actions.
- Provide or access additional support for staff exposed to risk/threat or harm.
- Ensure that if ever 'home visit suitability' is in dispute or presents as too high a risk to staff then this provision is withdrawn from parent/carer and appropriately recorded in the student personal information section of MIS system.

Lost Contact

If staff member/s conducting home visits fail to ring agreed contact at scheduled time, the contact should:

- Ring the staff mobile (the person may have forgotten to ring, be in a network black-spot or have a flat battery).
- Ring the previous home visited, to check that they have left.
- Ring the next home to be visited, if the case, to see if they have arrived there – ask the participant to ring school if/when they do arrive.
- Ring the staff's home to see if they have returned there – or have been in contact.
- Notify the Head Teacher / SLT of the situation.
- The Head Teacher / SLT will then contact the police and report the school's concerns.

Additional Considerations

Staff should be aware of the following and plan accordingly:

- Submit a home visit itinerary where it is planned to make successive home visits.
- Make arrangements to contact SLT if returning home immediately following a visit or any visit conducted out-of school-hours.

- They should not conduct a home visit where only minor/s (under the age of 18) are present. An adult representative (such as parent) should always be present.
- Staff making home visits to lone adult participants of the opposite gender should ideally be accompanied by a colleague of the same gender as the participant.

Personal Safety Advice

Locality Destinations:

- Be familiar with the local areas you intend to visit.
- If areas have reputation for high crime and anti-social behaviour consider requesting a colleague to accompany the visit.

Violent/Threatening Situation:

If during a home visit you feel at all threatened;

- Monitor for signs of impending anger/violence such as facial expressions, verbal threats and increased breathing rate.
- Summon help if needed
- Try to appear calm, speak slowly, clearly and softly and use simple language.
- Do not attempt to contradict the person if they are angry.
- Avoid body language such as crossed arms, hands on hips or shaking fingers.
- Avoid direct eye contact.
- If you cannot withdraw/leave you are entitled to use reasonable force to protect yourself.
- Notify the police immediately as soon as you can if you see fit or return to school and access the assistance and support of colleagues.

In Your Car:

- Keep your car in good working order, repair any faults and ensure it is serviced.
- Always ensure you have adequate fuel.
- Carry details of breakdown/rescue organisations in the vehicle.
- Plan your route before setting off.
- Do not have valuables visible in the car when driving.
- Keep the doors locked and windows closed.
- When leaving the car, lock personal belongings in the boot-do not leave on display.

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