



Policy for

Home Visits

Prepared by:	Adopted by Board of Directors
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Statement of intent

Staff employed by The Aspire Educational Trust may be required to undertake home visits for a variety of reasons, such as to support pupils' attendance, to conduct a welfare check and to establish partnerships with parents to secure the best support for their child. The trust and its schools are committed to ensuring all home visits are effective and procedures are in place to minimise potential risks to staff and pupils.

This policy sets out how home visits will be conducted in order to ensure:

- Visits always have a clear and legitimate purpose.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for all visits.
- The health and safety of staff is prioritised.
- Sufficient records are kept.
- Schools' safeguarding procedures are adhered to at all times.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'

This policy is designed to be used in conjunction with other policies such as the following:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance and Absence Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy
- Physical Intervention Policy
- Lone Worker Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees will be responsible for:

- Ensuring appropriate procedures are in place for home visits.
- Ensuring staff conducting home visits have received appropriate training, where necessary.
- Ensuring the effective implementation of the school's safeguarding procedures during home visits.
- Ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements are in place to cover staff undertaking home visits.

The principal will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Approving all home visits and ensuring they only take place where necessary and appropriate.
- Ensuring staff understand and follow the school's home visit arrangements.
- Ensuring the appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- Ensuring risk assessments are completed for home visits.
- Ensuring staff conducting home visits are provided with relevant background information and circumstances to inform the risks that may be present.

Staff conducting home visits will be responsible for:

- Following this policy for all home visits.
- Acting professionally and sensitively, with due regard to all relevant school policies and procedures.

- Seeking authorisation for all home visits and ensuring the school has all the relevant details of the visit.
- Prioritising their own health and safety during visits.

3. Home visits

Home visits will be undertaken for a number of reasons. This will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- To establish the welfare of a pupil, e.g. in response to an unauthorised absence.
- To work with parents to support and improve their child's attendance.
- To hold discussions with parents where it is in the best interests of the pupil to be held at their home, or the parent cannot attend school, e.g. due to a disability.
- To collect or drop off a pupil in certain circumstances, or to collect or drop off work or equipment for a pupil.
- To maintain contact with a pupil who is absent from school for a long period of time, e.g. due to an illness.

Home visits will be scheduled in advance with the agreement of the parents, unless the visit is due to an emergency or immediate concern, e.g. an unauthorised absence with no contact from parents or a safeguarding issue.

All home visits will require the authorisation of the principal. Home visits will only be authorised where they are deemed necessary and in the best interests of the pupil concerned. An appointment record will be completed before a home visit with necessary details, e.g. the expected time, location, people attending, which is kept and held by an appointed member of staff on the school site.

Home visits will take place during school hours wherever possible. Home visits outside of school hours will only be authorised if absolutely necessary and there is no reasonable alternative – in such cases, a responsible contact will be established to check on the welfare of staff conducting the visit.

Staff will carry an identity card which is shown upon arrival for a first visit at a home – the card will not be worn around the neck. If the pupil's parents are not present at the arranged time, staff will wait outside the premises for no longer than 10 minutes. If the pupil's parents do not arrive, the visit will be cancelled. The member of staff should put a notification that they were present through the door and return to school.

Staff will not enter a pupil's home if they feel unsafe. If a visit is cancelled because of concerns over safety, the reason for cancelling the visit will be communicated in writing to the principal.

If there are potentially dangerous animals in the residence, the school will request that they are kept in a separate room or placed outside for the duration of the visit. If the parent refuses, or is unable to adhere to this request, the visit will be cancelled.

Any issues or incidents during a home visit will be reported to the principal.

Where a staff member cannot be contacted or located during or after a home visit, the principal will be notified as soon as possible to decide on the appropriate response. The police will be contacted where there is concern for a staff member's welfare.

4. Personal safety

The principal will ensure staff are aware of the following before a home visit:

- The findings of the relevant risk assessment, i.e. the risks and how to minimise them
- The area they will be visiting and any relevant information
- Information on the pupil(s) involved, e.g. medical needs, any aggressive tendencies
- Relevant background information and family circumstances, e.g. aggressive tendencies, cultural sensitivities
- The potential presence of any aggressive pets
- The need to provide details of the visit, e.g. an itinerary with expected departure and arrival times
- The need to always carry a mobile phone and keep it switched on
- To never enter a home without an appropriate adult present
- To prioritise their health and safety and leave if at any point they feel unsafe or uncomfortable

A Home Visit Risk Assessment will be conducted by the principal. If a particular home visit poses new or additional risks, the risk assessment will be updated before the visit.

It is the responsibility of staff conducting home visits to keep themselves safe at all times. Staff will be instructed to avoid any situations that may risk their safety. Before entering the home and once inside, staff will identify possible exit routes and ensure they always have access to escape quickly in the event of an emergency.

Staff conducting home visits will carry a mobile phone which is kept switched on at all times. The number will be recorded and held by the school office. Staff will not carry large quantities of cash or other valuable personal possessions during home visits.

Where a staff member feels uncomfortable or unsafe at any point, they will end the visit immediately. The police will be contacted where there is a threat or use of violence.

The school office will check in by calling a staff member ten minutes into a visit's scheduled start time. Thereafter, staff will notify the school office every two hours to confirm there are no concerns. A code word will be established to enable staff to discretely alert that help is needed if required during a phone call or text.

Wherever possible, lone working will be avoided during home visits. At least two staff members will conduct home visits together, unless the principal decides it is safe and appropriate for a home visit to be conducted alone. All lone visits will follow procedures outlined in the Lone Working Policy.

A risk assessment for an instance of lone working will be carried out prior to the commencement of any home visit undertaken by a single staff member and will be updated in response to any changes in circumstances.

Staff will notify the school office of any changes to the schedule of a home visit, e.g. a delay due to traffic, as soon as possible.

Details of the vehicles used by staff conducting home visits, including make, model, registration number and colour, will be held by the school. Where possible, staff will park in a safe and well-lit area with the car facing in the opposite direction of the property.

5. Training

Before performing their duties, staff conducting home visits will undergo the appropriate training in strategies for the prevention of violence, and other training deemed relevant by the principal, e.g. cultural awareness.

The principal may delegate or request a member of staff undertakes a home visit – where a staff member is regularly required to undertake home visits, this will be reflected in their job description, and appropriate training will be provided.

6. Child protection and safeguarding

Staff conducting home visits will carry out their work in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy at all times.

Prior to a staff member being assigned to undertake a home visit, the school will ensure the staff member has the appropriate level of DBS check. An enhanced DBS and barred list check will be undertaken where necessary.

The principal will ensure staff understand the Staff Code of Conduct continues to apply during home visits. Staff will never enter a home or stay inside without an appropriate adult present. Staff will not hold conversations with siblings or other children in the home without an appropriate adult present.

Where possible, staff will leave physical intervention for parents to avoid allegations of misconduct. Where staff intervention is required, staff will act in accordance with the Physical Intervention Policy. Staff will only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and it will be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person. Staff will make a record of the incident as soon as reasonably possible and share it with the principal.

Staff conducting home visits will report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL or a deputy DSL as soon as possible. Serious concerns about a pupil's immediate welfare will be reported to the police and any relevant agencies.

Any allegations made against staff conducting home visits will be dealt with in accordance with the Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy or Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

7. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the trust safeguarding lead in accordance with the trust's policy review schedule.

8. ANNEX A

The Aspire Educational Trust

Home Visit Risk Assessment



Assessment conducted by:	Job title:	Covered by this assessment: AET staff
Date of assessment:		Date of next review:
Name of Pupil/s:	Address to be visited and contact details for parents/carers:	Date/s of visit/s:
Reason for visit:		
Context: The Aspire Educational Trust has a home visits policy. This policy requires home visits to be risk assessed. This is a model risk assessment for AET schools to use. Schools should consider all the potential risks identified and add additional control measures and risks as deemed necessary. After each visit the risk assessment should be reviewed and identified changes made prior to any further visits. The risk assessment should be filed as part of the pupil's safeguarding record.		

How to use this risk assessment

This is a generic risk assessment with the main potential risks and agreed AET control measures provided. Schools should initially undertake this risk assessment for their lowest risk home visits. Schools should highlight the control measures that are currently in place and consider any unmet control measures and, where possible, implement them as normal school practice. This risk assessment can then be used as a generic assessment for the majority of home visits. However, before undertaking a visit to a new home the school must consider whether there are any additional potential risks relating to the particular family and its home. If this is the case, additional risks and control measures should be added to the generic risk assessment that are specific to that family's home visit.

Risk assessments should always be completed before the initial visit. After the visit the risks and control measures should be reviewed and any changes made should a further home visit be planned or required. If on review the risk assessment is managing the risks to a satisfactory level the same document can be used for each subsequent visit by adding the date of each visit to this document.

Risk rating		Likelihood of occurrence		
		Probable	Possible	Remote
Likely impact	Major Is likely to present a risk to the safety of pupils or staff	High (H)	H	Medium (M)
	Severe Has potential to present a risk to the safety of pupils or staff	H	M	Low (L)

	Minor Is unlikely to present a risk to the safety of pupils or staff	M	L	L
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Potential risks	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	AET Controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
Staff						
Member of staff lone working and at greater personal risk to safety		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred location for all meetings with families is on school site • Home visit only being undertaken when deemed to be necessary • 2 members of staff for all first home visits • 2 members of staff for all higher risk home visits • 2 members of staff on all home visits where possible • Members of staff undertaking home visits have read and confirmed as read AET Lone Working and Home Visits policies. Audit trail that this has been completed – Compliance Manager preferred system. • Members of staff have read the home visit risk assessment. 				
Member/s of staff off site and location of visit unknown to line manager/principal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visit authorised by senior member of staff before leaving site • Record of visit being made is held in a key location including details of members of staff visiting, time of appointment, address being visited, time left and estimated time for return to site • Member of staff on site allocated to be responsible for monitoring time off site and alerting a senior member of staff if return to site is delayed and no contact has been made to explain the delay • Local system set up to effectively monitor staff who are off site on home visit 				

Potential risks	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	AET Controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of staff on a home visit to contact school every 2 hours when off site to confirm whereabouts – member of staff with responsibility for monitoring time off site to be kept informed 				
No communication between school and staff off site		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting staff to carry phones at all times Contact details for staff phones to be left on site with member of staff responsible for monitoring time spent off site Details of the vehicle used by staff, including make, model, registration number and colour, must be held by the school. All vehicles must have the required up-to-date business use insurance. Staff to put at least two school contact numbers into phone before leaving site Agreed code word/phrase to be confirmed locally and to be used if there is a need to covertly request help during a home visit If a member of staff does not contact school after an hour when on a home visit then the person with responsibility for monitoring their time off site will call them directly If school are unable to make contact the principal will be alerted and a decision made, based on risk analysis, to go to the address or to ring the police. 				
Member/s of staff entering a property where risks are unknown		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On arrival member of staff are told to be professionally curious about who or what may be in the house If a dog/s are loose then the member of staff will politely ask that they are shut in another room for the duration of 				

Potential risks	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	AET Controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<p>the meeting. If the parent does not agree to this, the member of staff will rearrange the meeting if they have any concerns for their safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown person observed to be in the house. Staff should politely ask to be introduced and establish their reason for being present. This should be done at the earliest opportunity and ideally before entering the house. • If member of staff feels uncomfortable holding the meeting with unexpected people in the house the meeting should be rearranged • If unknown persons are in the house and the family are unwilling to disclose who they are then the visit should not go ahead at that time. Staff member to politely inform the family they will return at a more convenient time as they have visitors. 				
Family not welcoming of a home visit from staff and presenting aggressively or in a threatening manner		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff end the visit if any aggressive or threatening behaviours observed • Unannounced home visits only made when necessary such as when contact can not be made by phone and there is a concern for the whereabouts or safety of a pupil • Appointment to visit agreed with family • Appointment time chosen to take into consideration the needs of the family • Family informed who will be visiting. Identity badges to be worn and visible at all times during the visit 				

Potential risks	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	AET Controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of staff visiting fully informed of circumstances and any previous difficulties in the relationship between school and family • All information from previous visits and other agencies considered when risk assessing a home visit • Careful consideration given to which members of staff attend a visit • Member of staff attending knowledgeable and experienced in de-escalation, managing difficult people and conversations and have good cultural awareness. 				
Member of staff finds them self in a vulnerable position when in the property		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to undertaking home visits members of staff are coached in safe practices to follow including ensuring they keep visual access and/or an open door in any one to one situation, they always position themselves strategically in a room to give direct exit route • Vehicle left parked in a safe and well-lit area with the car facing in the opposite direction of the property • Leave the property as quickly as possible • Lock themselves in their vehicle and drive away immediately • Make discrete contact with school if possible who should then alert the police to the situation • If possible ring for help immediately dialling 999. 				
Home visit requested by another agency on their behalf		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other agency asked to contribute to the risk assessment and to share any relevant risk and safety information • Other agency required to give reason for not making the visit 				

Potential risks	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	AET Controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal to use the AET home visit risk assessment to decide whether to authorise the visit. Reasons for decision taken will be recorded on the risk assessment. Principal to notify other agencies if visit will not proceed. 				
At risk of contracting an infectious disease		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If visit purpose is to maintain contact and check that a pupil is safe at home, a door step only visit will be made • On day of visit prior to attending the home enquire whether all house occupants are fit and well • If not, ask for details of symptoms • Establish what illness/disease the occupants are believed to be suffering from • Consult Public Health England Guidance on infectious diseases • If a family states that they have any presenting symptoms of an infectious disease, a home visit should be replaced by a safe alternative • Make an alternative contact plan if a visit is necessary for safeguarding or child protection reasons such as phone contact as a first option, video contact with safeguarding measures in place if visual contact is required. • If making video or phone contact the following minimum safeguarding measures should be in place <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact is authorised by senior leader 2. Make contact using school official channels 3. Use a school device to make contact wherever possible. If a personal device has to be used, then block the number so caller unknown is displayed 4. Make contact through the parent/carer's device 				

Potential risks	Risk rating prior to action H/M/L	AET Controls	In place? Yes/No	By whom?	Deadline	Risk rating following action H/M/L
		5. Make sure somebody else in school is aware the school contact is being made 6. Maintain professional standards 7. Contact is always made with consent of parents and carers 8. Make contact within regular school hours 9. Time of contact is agreed with family 10. Ensure parent is present throughout call and have phone on speaker at both ends of the call. 11. Have another member of staff present during the contact who can hear/see the conversation. 12. If this is not possible seek consent from the parent to record the call. Explain you're recording for school records only. Store recording securely and ensure GDPR compliance. 13. Make a record of the call on the pupil's safeguarding file.				

Decision

After implementing the highlighted control measures the overall risk is assessed as:

High Risk

Medium Risk

Low Risk

Home visit authorised to proceed?

Yes

No

Reason for decision and/or any further actions required:

Principal's (Signature)

Date