



SILS Home Visit Policy



1. Introduction

This guide is for key staff (support staff and SLT) whose roles may include visiting the homes of children and their families. It will provide a philosophy for conducting home visits, 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 and general suggestions for arranging the appointment and documenting the visits. This guide was developed from the experience and insight of professionals from the local authority, and other boroughs and with the intent to provide technical assistance to staff who also make home visits.

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Children as individuals

Each child is a unique individual and every child brings a different life story to the school setting.

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
- Fostering equal opportunities
- Collaborating with other agencies
- Supporting transitions
- Working together with home and families

1.1.2 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 child's learning in the secondary school setting.

Staff should value the role of parents 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. It is important to consider the selection of staff when making home visits; for example it would not be right to send a male member of staff 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.

1.1.3 Why make home visits?

Staff make home visits in order to better meet the needs of the child and family. In promoting partnership between parents and school, home visits provide for effective 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 much needed support to foster positive parenting. Effective home visiting furthers the mental, emotional, physical health and general well being of the child by serving the whole family.

2. The Initial Visit

2.1 Staff Preparation

- Staff conducting home visit to request up to date information (police check) on family from attached safer schools officer
- Home visits must be conducted in the presence of parents or legal guardian.
- Contact parents/carer/guardian a week to 10 days in advance by phone and letter. (**see Appendix A for sample letter and follow up with a phone call**).
- 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).
- Home visit to be conducted by two members of staff

Review child's records, family history and cultural background

- Try to ensure that you have learnt as much about the family as possible from the relevant staff involved with the young person.
- Learn names of family members.
- Research special needs issues.

Develop a tentative plan for visit

- Be flexible.
- Schedule 45 to 60 minutes for each home visit.
- Plan travel time, sequence of visits.
- Dress appropriately.
- Have staff ID with you
- Gather equipment, papers, pamphlets, etc.
- Be sure of location, research or carry map of the area.
- Leave schedule of home visits and contact information with office personnel (See Appendix C for sample doc.).

3. Arrival

3.1 Set the tone

- Be punctual to your home visits.
- Introduce self and other staff (wear staff ID).
- Always follow the client 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 social connection (small talk).
- Sit near the door/exit. Avoid letting the client sit between you and the door.
- Include other family members in 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; explore how the school intervention and/or mentor can support the family.

- Whether the child is present or not include information that may be useful to the parents' self-improvement, behaviour management and child development.
- Discuss direction of visit with parent.
- Give school overview; explain and interpret.
- Elicit feedback from parents regarding child's interests, concerns, and progress in school and at home: *"Tell me about your child" or "what does your child like best about school?"*
- Share information about community resources.
- Observe family interaction in its cultural context.
- Reinforce positive parenting.
- Discuss a variety of ways parents can be involved and record when and how the parent plans to be involved.
- Be respectful of parents' literacy skills but do not assume that they are capable / incapable of reading/writing.
- Avoid being left alone with young people for extended periods of time.

Children or 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 content of 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.
- Make a closure and good-bye.

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.

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 centre phone number and a time that you could be reached to set up a new appointment.
- Return to the centre and try to call the parent.
- If you are unable to locate the parent at that time, send a note home with the child the next school day, asking the parent to contact you for a time 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) it must be made up at a later date.

6. Your Safety

Don't be a target

- Stay alert.
- Trust your instincts.
- Dress appropriately, Leave 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 meeting location if visit cannot be made safely at home (e.g. library).
- Ask family members to come out to meet you if uncomfortable with area.
- Ask family to secure pets before arrival.
- Consider the use of cellular phones.

7. Suggestions

- 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 behavior—the parent is observing you.

D O N' T

- Impose values.
- Bring visitors without the parents'/guardians permission.
- Socialise excessively at the beginning of the visit.
- Exclude other members of the family 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 wouldn't do.

8. Communications

- All post-visit documentation is to be duplicated and filed within – Pupils school file or attached to SIMS
- Issues of a child protection nature are to be referred to the Designated Person who will then implement the Schools Safeguarding procedures if necessary.
- Contacts with other agencies on issues relating to home visit findings must be relayed through the correct channels.

9. Reviews, monitoring, evaluation

- These guidance notes will be reviewed and evaluated exactly one year from now either on or before **30th Sept 2015**.

Member(s) of Staff Responsible:

Lead Learning Mentor
Head of School KS4
Headteacher

A policy summary is included in the student starter pack and the policy will be published in its entirety on the school website (www.sils.southwark.sch.uk)

Appendix A: Pre visit letter to parent

RE: (Childs Name)

Dear.....,

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

During our visit, we would like to 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.

Yours sincerely,

SILS Mentoring Department



Tear or cut along line

HOME VISIT:

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

Child's name:.....

Purpose of visit:.....

Parent's signature:..... Date:

Appendix (B- E combined): Home Visit Report

Name of parent/guardian:	
Child's name:	
Date of visit & time:	
Home address & telephone no.:	
Confirmed by: date:	
Names of persons making visit:	
Purpose of visit :	

Proposed Transport Arrangements

Mini Bus / Own vehicle / Public Transport?	
Parking charges :	

Please sign and pass to SLT (Head of School or Headteacher) for authorization, Thank You

Staff Signature & date:	
Signature of Head of Centre:	

Post Visit Update:

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"/>
Points for action:	

**Appendix B
Home Visit Report Form (Pre visit)**

Name of parent/guardian:	
Child's name:	
Date of visit & time:	
Confirmed by: date:	
Names of persons making visit:	

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:	
Mentor/staff comments:	
Parent comments:	
Parent signature:	

Appendix D
Home Visit Report (Post visit)

Child's name:	
Parent's name:	
Date:	
Time:	
Purpose:	
Activity:	
Accomplishments:	
Suggested follow-up:	
Mentor/staff signature:	
Parent signature:	

Appendix E

Home Visit – Staff Travel Arrangements

Staff Name:	
Child's Name:	
Child's Address:	
Date of Visit:	

Transport – Please give details where applicable

SILS3 Mini Bus:	
Own Vehicle – Mileage:	
Bus/Oyster Card Details:	
Parking Fee:	

Please sign and pass to Head of Centre for authorisation – Thank You

Staff Signature:	
Authorised by Head of Centre:	Yes/No
Signature of Head of Centre:	