

Home Visit Policy

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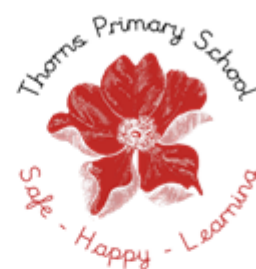
Date: September 2023

Our vision is for all children to be safe, happy and learning. We deliver this vision through clear aims that are underpinned by our school commitments.

Every child is safe, happy and learning because every adult is caring, happy in their work and skilled.

We value:

working Together
happiness
achieve without limits
fairness and equality
kindness
safety and security



Our aim is for every child to:

- feel safe and secure at all times, and to know that the adults in school will help them if they are worried, frightened or feel unsafe;
- be an independent, resilient learner who sees mistakes as an opportunity to learn, is not afraid to try and seeks help when they need it;
- be an excellent communicator: able to listen and understand, speak with clarity and with a broad vocabulary;
- be a reader: finding pleasure in books and reading and with the skills to read fluently and accurately and to understand a range of texts;
- be a writer: writing fluently and with detail for a specific purpose and an understanding of the audience, using and applying a range of skills;
- be a mathematician: solving problems in a range of contexts by applying fluent knowledge and recall of number facts;
- develop the knowledge, skills and understanding of scientists, artists, designers, geographers, historians, linguists, musicians and performers;
- value being physically active and healthy;
- have the skills required to thrive in a technological age;
- be self-aware, emotionally intelligent and accepting of others, showing kindness and respect and an understanding of differences;
- acquire the skills and desire to contribute positively to the wider community.

Our commitment is to provide every child with:

- a school that is well led and managed by a strong team of leaders and governors;
- school staff who will keep them safe and who know what to do to protect them from harm;
- a sense of justice and knowledge of right and wrong;
- high-quality teaching from skilled professionals;
- teachers and support staff who have opportunities to grow and develop, extending their own expertise through training and development;
- access to specialist services to support additional needs;
- buildings and grounds that are safe, welcoming, clean and tidy;
- a learning environment that promotes and supports active learning;
- challenges that stretch and encourage higher-order thinking, team work and creativity;
- exciting and stimulating resources that encourage the acquisition and deepening of knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum;
- enrichment opportunities, including after-school clubs, exciting trips and visitors to broaden their experience of the wider world;
- a voice – where their views and opinions matter and are listened to;
- opportunities for their parents and carers to spend time in school and be involved in school activities;
- the chance to try new things and have a go, developing the resilience that will prove valuable throughout life;
- ambitions and aspirations;
- a 'can do' attitude, and the 'powers' for lifelong learning and success.

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Statement of intent

At Thorns Primary school, staff may be required to undertake home visits for a variety of reasons, such as to support pupils' attendance, provide tuition, and to establish partnerships with parents to secure the best support for their child. The school is 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.
- The school's 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
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board 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 headteacher 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 if necessary.
- 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 deliver tutoring.
- 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 headteacher. Home visits will only be authorised where they are deemed necessary and in the best interests of the pupil concerned. The headteacher or member of SLT in their absence, will be informed before a home visit with necessary details, e.g. the expected time, location, people attending.

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. If the pupil's parents are not present at the arranged time, staff will wait no longer than fifteen minutes. If the pupil's parents do not arrive, the visit will be cancelled.

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 to the headteacher and recorded on CPOMS.

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 headteacher.

Where a staff member cannot be contacted or located during or after a home visit, the headteacher 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 headteacher will ensure staff are aware of the following before a home visit:

- The findings of any 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

If a particular home visit poses new or additional risks, a Home Visit Risk Assessment will be conducted by the headteacher.

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 after the expected return 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 headteacher decides it is safe and appropriate for a home visit to be conducted alone.

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 headteacher, e.g. cultural awareness.

The headteacher 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. Attendance officer visits

All attendance officers will work in partnership with the SLT, the LA's School Attendance Support Team and any other relevant partners. Home visits for the purpose of attendance support and improvement will be used in line with the Attendance and Absence Policy.

After a visit, any agreements made between an attendance officer and parents will be recorded and kept in the pupil's attendance record. Reminder letters will be sent to the pupil's parents if the pupil fails to adhere to the agreements made during the home visit. Continued failure to adhere to the agreement will result in a follow-up visit.

7. 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 headteacher 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. 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 headteacher.

Staff conducting home visits will report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL or a deputy 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.

8. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by the headteacher and the governing board.

The headteacher will be responsible for monitoring this policy and procedures and will amend it accordingly following any incidents or concerns. Feedback from staff who have conducted home visits will be used to inform the review process.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2024