**Saint Francis Nursery Class**



**Home Visit Policy**

This policy is designed to protect the safety of all school staff carrying out home visits. 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.

Early Years home visits will always take place with staff in pairs. Home visits can only take place when the policy and protocols are fully met. Policy and procedures must be consistently applied.

**Rationale for carrying out home visits**

There is a unanimous feeling in our school that the home visits which staff undertake have huge benefits. 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 keyworker and staff in a safe environment, where they feel confident and at ease.

For Keyworker 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.

**Guidelines for Staff**

**Structure of home visits**

The Keyworker and Team Leader 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 solely on the child. This can be the beginning of the relationship between the keyworker 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 Keyworker and Team Leader. Thirty minutes is the standard period of time devoted to each home visit. Visits take place either during the term before children are due to start attending Nursery or at the beginning of their start term. Parents are always telephoned in advance to confirm the appointment.

**Equipment needed**

All visits need careful structuring and prepared resources. Visiting staff members will take an information pack including a care plan with them when visiting a pupil and their parents in their home. This would usually contain standard forms that would need to be filled in by the parents. Either the Keyworker or the Team Leader will 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 map to locate addresses, a camera to take a photograph of the child and a range of toys and books for the child to play with.

**Before the visit**

* Show respect for Parents/Carers as equal partners.
* Be a good listener.
* Make appointments in advance and offer alternative dates/times.
* 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 (Appendix 2 – parents’ information sheet).
* 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 Leave details of your visiting schedule with another member of staff

**During the visit**

* Be aware of pets and other adults who may be in the home.
* 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.
* Return to the school or phone in when you have completed visits and are back at home.

**Specific Protocols for All Home Visits**

**Risk Assessment**:

* Check records to see what is known and information available.
* Talk to other professionals who may already have had contact or involvement with the family.
* 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 line manager.
* Where potential risks are identified, arrange an alternative meeting environment

**ALWAYS COMPLETE THE RISK ASSESSMENT BEFORE A VISIT TAKES PLACE – Appendix 1**

**Health and Safety:**

* Inform a nominated member of staff when you are leaving for a home visit.
* Leave the details of the home visit schedule with a senior member of staff. Include a list of visit addresses and times including family name, child’s name, address, telephone number, purpose of visit, and time due back at base.
* You must inform the nominated person if there is a cancellation or alteration to the time.
* 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.
* 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.
* All Home Visits must finish by 16.30.
* Contact the nominated person immediately
* Contact the nominated person immediately after the visit is finished informing them that you are safe. The nominated person must advise the Head Teacher if staff carrying out a home visit has not made contact by the appointed time and locally agreed actions must be followed.

**Appendix 1 – see separate link for Risk Assessment**

**Covid-19 August 2020**

*Due to Covid-19 and recommendations made by the Scottish Government and Care Inspectorate, St Francis Nursery Class staff will no longer complete home visits as part of the transition to nursery process.*

*The Team Leader will liaise with the parent via phone call to arrange a visit to the nursery. Where possible the parent and child will meet with the keyworker in an outdoor space whilst the Team Leader speaks with the parent to address any concerns etc.*

*We will continue to review this policy in line with Scottish Government guidance.*

**Appendix 2**

**Parents’ information sheet**

**Home visits – Your questions answered**

**What is a home visit?**

As the name suggests a home visit is an informal visit to your home by school staff. It is usually carried out when your child has been offered a place at the setting but before they actually start.

**Why do home visits?**

Home visits are a really good way for staff to begin to get to know both you and your child and vice versa. It is a great opportunity to spend some time in a relaxed atmosphere, exchanging information and planning your child’s start at the setting. You will also have the chance to ask questions and express any concerns you may have. It is not an inspection of you or your home! You are under no obligation to accept a home visit and a meeting can be arranged at the setting if you prefer. All information is considered confidential and will not be shared without your permission.

**Practicalities**

**Who will do the home visit?**

This is often but not always the Keyworker and the Team Leader.

**How long will it take?**

The length of the visit can vary; it is usually between 30 – 45 minutes but no longer than an hour.

**What will happen at the home visit?**

We know that children like to be busy and active! One member of staff will usually get to know your child by playing with them and showing them books or photos of the setting. Your child may also like to share some of their favourite toys or activities with the practitioner. The other member of staff will complete some basic information forms with you, give you a welcome pack and go through some details about the setting.

You will also have the opportunity to start your child’s Care Plan and discuss anything else you would like the setting to know about your child. Any questions or concerns can be answered and discussed.

**How should I prepare for a home visit?**

* Have some basic information to hand such as your doctor’s name and address, your emergency contact details etc in order to speed up the form filling process.
* Try to remove any distractions, for example family pets. It is also helpful if the television has been turned off.
* Have some of your child’s favourite toys or playthings available, as these can help the practitioner to engage with your child.
* Prepare a list of questions you may want to ask just so you don’t forget!
* If you have any questions, worries or concerns about your home visit or would like any further information please contact us at the setting.