

Whitnash Nursery School and Early Years Teaching School



"Recognising and celebrating the uniqueness
of every child"

Home Visiting Policy

Written: Spring 1995 Last reviewed: Spring 2010 Reviewed:
September 2019

Written by Staff and Governors as a result of current school
practice.

HOME VISITING POLICY:

We regard home visiting as one of the most vital stages of our induction process. We positively encourage all parents to look favourably on home visits as a supportive experience and one that will be beneficial to all parties concerned, i.e. children, parents and staff. **The primary purpose of a home visit is to begin to establish an effective relationship with the child and family that will best support the child to begin school and be ready to learn. They establish a working alliance based upon co-responsibility.**

For many young children this maybe the first time they have stepped outside the 'family' and attended a School alone and to prepare them for the experience we aim to build effective relationships that will support the child to feel safe and ready to explore and enquire. Research tells us that home visiting is hugely valuable and allows an initial and important relationship between keyworkers and children and the school and families to begin.

For the child:

The new 'keyworker' becomes 'familiar', they have been able to visit the child in the security of their home environment. Parents have welcomed them into their home environment and this supports the child to begin to consider the keyworker as a safe and familiar person. When children then arrive at the school they have a 'face' they recognise and may, if they felt confident during the visit, have already explored a story with or shared a favourite toy at home with this adult. Many children will talk about the home visit with adults in school for several weeks and sometimes months later children may recall "you came to my house".

For Parents:

At Whitnash Nursery School we view Parents as the child's first educator and ourselves as they second. The home visit provides 1:1 meeting time between the teacher and Parent in which the Parent can inform the Teacher of their child's interests, skills and knowledge. This ensures that the teacher can then prepare a suitable welcome and environment back at school based on the knowledge of the child they have gained.

Home visits also provide parents with a short meeting time in which they can ask questions and share details that are individual to their child. It is also a useful time to share any worries or thoughts about how their child may settle into school. For Parents it also allows the relationship to begin with the teacher who will be a first point of contact for information and discussion while your child is at school. This partnership to support learning will build as the year progresses but Home Visits are an ideal and individual way in which to begin.

Parents often reflect that they are initially unsure of the value of home visits but can quickly see the impact in terms of their child's relationships with teacher and confidence to settle into a new school environment.

Research tells us that children who have a positive and carefully tailored settling in experience are likely to transfer to the next school very successfully as their first key transition was managed successfully. Planning carefully and getting it right the first time for each child can have a significant impact upon their ability to then begin Primary School successfully.


We 'Home Visit' all children prior to them beginning School, this includes our 2 year olds accessing the Nurture Nursery within our School. Visits for 2 year old are relatively new but already parents and staff have been able to identify their value and importance, noticing children settling quickly and establishing relationships faster. Parents also report they feel more confident and comfortable about engaging with the School so they have a better dialogue with regard to their child's experiences and learning.

Home visits are also offered when children change from Nurture Nursery to Main Nursery and keyworkers change. Parents may feel relationships between children, parents and staff have already been well established but we would always recommend a home visit to establish a new relationship with a new keyworker. Those children starting in the January without previous Nurture Nursery experience will be offered home visits to establish initial relationships with the family.

If a child joins the school at any other time during the year, then that child is always visited by the Family Group Leader, either during lunchtime or after school. Likewise, if a child has a prolonged absence for any reason, the Family Group Leader may visit. This demonstrates that we do not see Home Visiting as an annual "one-off" process that is only done each September. We home visit when and if it is felt necessary or important, for whatever reason. Occasionally a child is home visited more than once if they are particularly anxious or reserved.

AIMS

Our aims for home visiting are to:

- build relationships with families – establishing strong bonds between children, parents, and the school community
- build a partnership between home and school
- recognise value and build upon the principle that parents are the first educators of their children
- enable parents to be in control of the situation i.e. lead discussions about their own child in the comfort and security of their own home
- create a shared commitment, or co-responsibility for the child's development

Home visits provide:

- an excellent opportunity for both child and parents to meet staff in their own homes where they feel comfortable and secure.
- the opportunity for parents to have an individual consultation with a member of staff, to be able to discuss any concerns about their child. These concerns can be very varied in nature and include, for example health problems, family problems, fears about how the child may or may not settle in school, curriculum queries and general routine enquires about school life.
- the opportunity for the child to have individual contact with a member of staff and to be able to share their own toys, books, bedroom, house, family.
- staff with the opportunity to gain information which is a vital part of the settling in process, and will help when working with the child concerned within

school, e.g. likes and dislikes, favoured activities, position in family, previous pre-school experiences etc.

□ If the child is comfortable staff will take a photograph that children can then find on their drawer and to place on the self registration board on their first day. ^L_{SEP} Timing and procedure for Home Visits ^L_{SEP} Parents are notified of their Home Visit by letter in the June prior to entry the following term. Included in the letter are the names of the two members of staff visiting, and the child's actual starting date (see appendix I).

This enables parents to plan ahead in terms of childminders/carers, or notify us of holiday arrangements etc., so we can alter dates and times to suit the family. ^L_{SEP} Staff always home visit in pairs, during the first two weeks after school re- opens in September. This enables one person to talk to the parent, while the other can talk and play with the child therefore gaining maximum advantage from the time allocated.

^L_{SEP} Each family and home situation is different and it is the responsibility of staff to be very sensitive. Between 15 and 30 minutes is allowed for the visit and 10 minutes travelling time in between visits. Visits may last longer if the next home is near. ^L_{SEP} Each pair of staff visit two or three homes in the morning before returning to school to share information with other members of staff over lunchtime. Occasionally visits are made at lunchtime if this is a more convenient time for parents. Each pair of staff then visit two more homes in the afternoon, after which they return to the School to share information again. A minimum of 12 visits is achieved per day and a maximum of 15.

Records on each child are started immediately, using the information gathered from playing with the child and talking to parents at the Home Visit. Medical notes are recorded and given to the First Aider for a summary to be displayed in the first aid cupboard. This allows quick and easy access for all staff throughout the year e.g. who has an allergy to what/who has asthma and what the individual procedure/medication/dose is in the case of administration etc.

Positive Home Visiting

As a staff we are all sensitive, diplomatic, and kind, and all feel extremely positive about home visiting – it is given very high status and involves much planning and preparation before the visit and hard work on collating information gathered after the visit.

We all recognise the benefits of home visiting - as do all parents, though some not until after the visit - or perhaps several weeks later when they recognise the strength of the teacher/child relationship that has sprung from the visit - and the way in which the child keeps referring back to the visit, emphasising its importance to them.

We ensure that we all avoid using “jargon” with parents e.g. L.A., positive self esteem - or if we do by mistake, make sure we explain what we mean.

In preparation for home visiting we:

- read through the policy and discuss procedures
- prepare all the paperwork
- read all information gleaned previously about the family i.e. application forms, Health Visitor referral

forms etc.

- check we have all the resources we need

- check the address and location of the family's home. ELL
SEP We ensure we offer plenty of opportunities for parents to talk – home visiting is not purely an opportunity for us to give information. Parents and children may have concerns and anxieties which need to be listened to quietly, carefully, and respectfully, and the parent/child supported and helped through their concerns. ELL
SEP We ensure parents know that we are always available to answer further questions and to share information, or repeat it. It's so easy for a parent to forget, become muddled, or just not understand, especially if it is their first experience of a child going to school. We are there to help, support, and say things in different ways to aid understanding.

Above all

We must make sure that parents know that it is a true partnership we are seeking with them -