



Steps to take when a child is absent from school

When a child is absent from school and we have not been given a known reason for why that child/children are absent from school, please follow these steps:

- 1) Try to telephone the parent(s) / carer(s)
- 2) If unable to make contact via telephone, leave voicemails / send text message / teachers2parents message
- 3) Try to make contact via the emergency contacts listed (each child should have at least three emergency contacts)
- 4) If we reach **11am** and all reasonable efforts have been made to try to account for the pupil's whereabouts, but still the pupil has not been accounted for, it is at this point our safeguarding procedures would dictate a home visit / 'door knock'.

It is of course acknowledged that each school knows their children and families so would always apply professional judgement as to whether a home visit is judged to be a necessary course of action. The indicators for such a planned response would be determined by levels of vulnerability of the child/children, previous history or known concerns/risks to the child. However, staff should always bear in mind that a child may still be at risk, even if there are no previous concerns.

Equally those factors may also generate a decision not to visit due to potential risks posed to staff. It would never be the guidance of the school or trust that any planned approach or policy would put staff into any danger. Instead, if it was felt to be a risky or dangerous situation then it would always be at the directive of the SLT to involve local Children's Services / Community Policing teams / Education Welfare / Early help hubs over sending any staff members out to a family home.

Home Visit / Door knock protocol

If a Home Visit / Door Knock is deemed appropriate then please follow these procedural steps:

- Home Visits / Door Knocks are always done in pairs and usually with at least one staff member being a DSL / DDSL or Senior Leader. It is never an expectation that staff will support in a home visit if they voice clearly that they do not feel safe or comfortable participating in this.

- When checking the whereabouts of a child, the recommendation is that staff do not enter the home, but simply assess if the child is present at the address.
- On occasions a “Home Visit” may be deemed appropriate. This would usually be to meet with parents if there is a concern around safeguarding or attendance or if the child has additional needs and it is deemed more suitable to hold the meeting in the family home.
- When leaving for any Home Visit or “Door Knock” please ensure staff carry a mobile phone which is fully charged and with signal; ensuring a member of the office team or someone back at school has the correct number for.
- If travelling by car ensure the office team know the car colour / make / reg. If travelling by foot then the route must be agreed and shared before leaving the building.
- When parking at a pupil’s address ensure the car is parked facing the direction of exit.
- Have an agreed time whereby the office will be ringing the staff member to check in with or vice versa. Equally a time must be agreed when staff are expected to be back at school with a clear understanding that unless they call to advise otherwise, then the police will be contacted by school if the staff do not return at the agreed time.
- A code word should be agreed which can be used over the telephone with staff back at school. If staff on the door knock use this word then it is the understanding of the school to respond by calling 999 is immediately giving all the details listed above.
- If the staff feel at any point uncomfortable or unsafe then they abandon the door knock. Equally if when they approach the house they have any concerns then they would contact the police and not continue in any way to approach the property.
- If following the door knock we are not able to establish the whereabouts of a child and (in consultation with the school's leadership team) have concerns for the child's welfare, then it is the school's legal obligation to notify the police and request that they do a welfare check at the property. The school will also notify local Children's Services.

The above guidance is being given in response to a serious case review for Chadrack Mbala, this was a child who was found dead with his mother in his home after two weeks of non-school attendance.

If you wish to do any further reading on this case then the link is attached to 'regulation 28 prevention of future deaths' report attached for your information.

<https://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Chadrack-2017-0120.pdf>

*Death of a 4-year-old boy prompts calls for review of schools' absence approach
Some colleagues may be aware of the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of a four-year-old child, Chadrack Mbala Mulo, in Hackney – click [here](#) for the full article regarding the death.*

Chadrack had significant learning needs and lived with his mother. His mother died in the family home and Chadrack was then alone for two weeks in the family flat before dying himself. The school had made attempts to contact his mother and had visited the family flat.

*The coroner has sent the brief three-page [coroner's report](#) to the Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families, and a response is anticipated shortly.
While waiting for a response from the Minister, we would like to take this opportunity to remind all schools:*

- Of the importance of having as many contact numbers as possible and avoiding relying on one contact number.*
- To consider the circumstances in which, and at what stage, they consider it appropriate to make home visits.*
- To be mindful of the distinction between a formal attendance issue (Chadrack was not compulsory school age) and a potential welfare issue.*