



ST EDMUND'S SCHOOL

CANTERBURY

LONE WORKING POLICY 2023

Signed

Reviewed: September 2023

Next review: September 2024

Introduction

St Edmund's School Canterbury and its Governing Body have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees while they are at work. At any given time there are numbers of employees who are working alone, whether as a substantial part of their working life or on an occasional basis. The Governing Body have a responsibility to assess the risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary; and the employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and others in lone working situations. Lone working is not inherently unsafe and proper precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone.

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to outline the Governing Body's responsibilities towards staff working alone by:

- Defining what 'lone working' is
- Taking action to reduce risk to lone workers
- Ensuring that all employees are aware of their responsibility to use necessary guidance to assist lone workers

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including temporary workers and those employed on a casual basis.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Policy.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those 'who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'. They may include:

- Staff with responsibility for opening up and closing buildings;
- Staff working outside normal working hours, i.e. 18.00 – 08.00.
- School staff working during holiday periods;
- Staff working in an isolated part of the building;
- Staff working in an environment away from the school.

The definition can cover employees in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures. This policy will refer to high risk and low risk activities.

Some employees may spend most of their working lives with others but find themselves working alone occasionally, for example, when working late. Others will work alone on a daily basis. This policy will refer to frequent lone workers and occasional lone workers.

Potential hazards of lone working

People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, additionally they may encounter the following:

- Accidents or sudden illnesses may happen when there is no-one to summon help or administer first aid
- Violence or the threat of violence
- Fire
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g. heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment
- Lack of a safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in)
- Steps can be taken to reduce the risks of these events

The perception of these hazards or the actual risks may be different for different people. For example the inexperience or your works may underestimate the risks of an activity; some workers may feel particularly vulnerable to violence away from the workplace or after dark; or a medical condition may make it unsafe for an individual to work alone.

The school must consider these factors when doing risk assessments. If there are lone workers within an area the manager must take appropriate steps to reduce the risk, particularly for frequent lone workers or lone workers engaged in high-risk activities. They should consider:

- Does the workplace present any special risk to a lone worker?
- Can all the equipment, substances and goods used on the premises be safely handled by one person? Is any manual handling involved safe for a single person?
- Is there a risk of violence or the threat of violence? Is the nature of a visit or the person being visited likely to increase the risk? Will the employee be alone in a dark or remote location?

Controls

Staff should seek the permission of the Bursar to work alone in the building outside normal school hours. The experience and training of all staff and the activities to be undertaken will be taken into consideration before allowing lone working.

The lone worker should notify their line manager of their intended time at work and their intended time of job / task completion.

All lone working staff should establish their own checking in and out system with either family, friends or work colleagues. It is advised that lone workers provide a relative or friend with a telephone contact number (Line Manager's mobile phone numbers) to call if the lone worker fails to return home at the expected time.

Staff should not enter the school premises if there are signs of intruders but are advised to immediately call the police.

Staff should ensure that areas of the school not in use are kept secure. Staff must not place themselves in danger by challenging intruders or vandals but should call the police for assistance.

Staff should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness.

Only agreed tasks are to be undertaken avoiding high risk activities, i.e. working at height.

Lone workers must be considered capable of responding correctly in an emergency situation by the Bursar. Whenever possible it is recommended that staff work with a colleague.

Lone workers should not undertake activities that have been identified as medium or high risk or which are potentially hazardous given their own level of experience and the nature of the task.

Staff will receive information in the staff handbook and/or training to help ensure they understand the risks associated with lone working and to minimise these risks. All lone workers, in an otherwise unoccupied building, should follow the school's Fire and Emergency Procedures.

Staff have a responsibility for making themselves familiar with and following the school's safety procedures and location of safety equipment.

In the situation where two or more people are working in isolated areas of an otherwise unoccupied building, personnel should keep each other informed about their movements.

Measures to reduce the risk of lone working

Supervision

Lone workers are by definition not under constant supervision. However, line-managers can ensure that the employees understand the risks associated with their work and the relevant safety precautions. They can put into place arrangements for the individual to contact a line-manager if they need additional guidance.

Occasional site visits may be appropriate, particularly if there are high-risk activities. Employees new to a job or undergoing training may need to be accompanied initially. Regular contact by phone or radio may be appropriate. Managers should assess what level of supervision is required.

Checking system

All out of hours lone working staff should establish their own checking in and out system with family, friends, or work colleagues. It is advised that lone workers provide a relative or friend with a telephone contact number (e.g. Line Manager's) to call if the lone worker fails to return home at the expected time.

Reporting back

A system should be in place to ensure that a lone worker returns to their base or their home at the completion of a task away from the normal workplace. For high risk or frequent lone workers the Manager may stipulate that the employee must inform him/her of their whereabouts and the expected duration of the visit so that if the employee has not reported in or cancelled the call by the expected hour, a call will automatically be triggered to check the employee is safe. External contractors sign in in Main Reception (and wear a school lanyard with identification) so that staff are aware of their presence on site. They have to sign out every day, and any outstanding non returns are checked with the Estates Manager or those concerned. For occasional lone workers or low risk lone workers, they should inform a colleague where they are going and when they are expected back; arranging to ring the office at the conclusion of the visit or call; issuing a mobile phone number to allow a contact call to be made if the employees return is overdue. All employees involved share a responsibility to maintain such informal systems for safe lone working. The school should also consider the members of staff who meet with visitors on a one to one basis on the school premises. Whilst they are not alone in the building, they may be alone with the visitor in a place where other colleagues cannot see them. The school should consider systems for ensuring that they have emerged safely from such a meeting and systems for raising an alarm if necessary.

Accidents and Emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. This should include being made aware of special arrangements for out of hours incidents. First aid may be available from school staff, or it may be prudent for an individual frequently working away from the base to carry a basic first aid kit if there is a foreseeable risk of injury. It is also necessary for employees working alone in a building or part of a building to let the Estates Manager know they are there, so they can be accounted for in case of fire.

Medical conditions

Staff should not work alone if they have medical conditions that might cause incapacity or unconsciousness.

Task not suitable for lone working

Risk assessment will identify the hazards of work. When a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back up should be put in place, or the work reassigned to another worker or done in hours when the worker is not alone. For example a worker who arrives before other colleagues may be instructed not to attempt heavy manual lifting until another colleague arrives to assist.

Intruder

Staff should not enter a school premises if there are signs of intruders but are advised to immediately contact the police.

Violence at work

The risk of violence may not be directly related to a particular property. It may be associated with the environmental issues like working alone outside after dark, or a situation may arise where there was no previous history of incidents. Employees likely to be lone workers in such situations should be trained in dealing with difficult people, in ways to recognise a risk and in behaviour which may reduce the risk (up to and including terminating the visit). All incidents of violence must be reported.

Specific risk

Night time lock up

See Caretaker / Lockup Risk Assessment

Conclusion

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors. The school must ensure that they have not only introduced measures to reduce any risk but must also ensure that they have communicated their expectations to lone workers and trained them appropriately. All employees, including lone workers, are responsible for following safe systems of work and all employees can take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with their normal working life.