



Elm C of E Primary School & Pre-School.

Lone Working Policy

September 2025

Elm C of E Primary School is committed to ensuring staff, volunteers and contractors enjoy a safe working environment. It is recognised that there are occasions when teaching, support, administrative, grounds, caretaking or cleaning staff may be required, or choose, to work alone or in isolated situations. This however may introduce risks for a normally non-hazardous work activity.

What is lone working?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone working as “those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”.

Categories of lone workers

Within Elm C of E Primary School a lone worker will most probably fall within one of the following categories:

- Those who work in an otherwise unoccupied part of the building
- Those who work in an isolated part of school grounds
- Those responding to an alarm call out after normal school hours
- Those who come into school to work during evenings, school holidays and weekends (on their own).
- Those who work away from base
- Homeworkers.

Working alone on site

For many school staff, working alone forms an integral part of their day-to-day duties at work. These can include the following scenarios:

- 1:1 working for teachers, LSAs, teaching assistants, mentors and Thrive Practitioner
- Teachers, LSAs/teaching assistants working alone with small groups of pupils away from the main classroom or being on their own while providing playground supervision
- cover supervisors being responsible for whole-class supervision on their own
- support staff being left on their own to supervise classes during wet play periods
- support staff being left on their own to supervise pupils in first aid or Covid isolation rooms
- support staff providing personal care for pupils, such as administering first aid or medication, or assisting with toileting needs
- support staff being required to put up displays on their own
- office and maintenance staff being left on their own in premises during parts of the day and during some holiday and school closure periods

Working away from base

Some activities and duties also require support staff to work away from school. Most commonly these involve:

- school trips, e.g. to swimming pool (with changing room supervision)
- home/school liaison visits to students' homes.
- Courses
- Working from home

What are the risks of lone working?

There are many risks associated with staff being required to work on their own. These can relate to their physical wellbeing and health and safety and can include:

- violence/abuse/bullying from pupils
- personal safety issues while visiting students' homes
- onset of sudden illness
- feelings of stress and isolation
- accidents or emergencies requiring evacuation procedures or access to first aid
- working at height
- risk of intruders.
- Fire
- Unsafe access or exit
- Equipment failure
- Inadequate provision of rest, hygiene and welfare facilities
- Violence from members of the public
- Manual handling
- Breakdown or other emergency whilst travelling as part of the working day
- Dealing with cash

There can also be risks to the professional integrity of school staff which could involve accusations of theft or misconduct and/or malicious allegations from pupils. Subsequent investigations or rumours can exact a great toll on the mental health of those accused as well as threaten their livelihood.

What does the law say?

Lone working is not illegal. It is accepted that some workers will be required to work all or some of the time on their own. However, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees while at work. In addition, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations state every employer should make a "suitable and sufficient" assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees. This includes lone workers and those who spend part of their time working alone.

The key principle that underpins the law is that those who work alone should not be placed at any greater risk than any other worker.

What should a lone-working risk assessment consider?

Risk assessments should be relevant to the circumstances of the staff member in question and the particular tasks being undertaken. Information on risks should be gathered from all available sources including, for example, the accident and any incident logs E.g Medical Tracker

It is also essential that staff are asked by the person carrying out the risk assessment if they have any concerns about working on their own. Often it is only the person actually doing the job that can identify all the risks associated with it.

While not an exhaustive list, the following are some of the questions that a lone working risk assessment should ask:

- Is there a risk of violence or aggression?
- Is the member vulnerable to malicious accusations?
- Is the member vulnerable, e.g. pregnant/young/ disabled/have English as a second language/have a particular medical condition?
- Will the member be using machinery/equipment/ handling chemicals that could be hazardous?
- Will the member be working at height e.g putting up or dismantling a display?
- What will happen in the event of an emergency e.g. if the member falls ill, has an accident or there is a fire alarm or emergency procedure?
- Is there access to first aid facilities?
- What age of pupils is the member is working with? Younger pupils may require a higher staff/student ratio.
- Do the pupils have any special needs e.g. behavioural/medical that require closer supervision and a higher staff/student ratio?
- Is the staff member working in an isolated part of the school or in a separate annexe/cabin/ playing field?
- Type of activity being undertaken? Are the pupils on the move? Are they in the playground or using equipment as this could increase the risk of an accident?

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure that Risk Assessment is undertaken and that members of staff are aware of the content of this as well as the risks of Lone Working. Hazards identified will be evaluated by the Headteacher for the likelihood of the hazard causing harm. Measures will be introduced if the assessment shows that existing precautions are inadequate to eliminate or adequately control the hazard. The risk assessment will be subject to review to ensure it is relevant and current to the workings of the school.

Contractors will be given the opportunity by the School Office Manager or Caretaker to complete a Lone Working Risk Assessment as necessary and receive the appropriate Health and Safety information.

Where the assessment identifies risks to the lone worker, the first question asked must be whether the work needs to be carried out alone in the first place. If the answer is yes, which it will be for many activities undertaken by school staff, then arrangements must be put in place to provide the lone worker with additional support systems or back-up. What are known as 'control measures' must be introduced to reduce the risks identified as much as possible. and should include details of the following:

- The training and information that will be provided to support staff to help them recognise and deal with any situations which may arise that threaten their or their pupils', health and safety. This could relate to violence or aggression/basic first aid/emergency procedures in the event of fire, etc.
- The safety procedures for those working on their own including guidance and recommendations on staff/ student ratios in certain circumstances, eg, in libraries at lunchtimes or exclusion units.
- How lone workers will be contacted and accounted for during an emergency situation.
- The information and guidance provided to those paying home visits e.g. background information on families; to always let someone know where they are and how long they are expected to be; or contact information.
- Provision of equipment e.g. mobile phone, walkie-talkie or personal alarm for those who may be working in an isolated location or remote part of the school's premises.
- Proper training and provision of personal protective equipment for those dealing with hazardous substances.

Controls

Only the Headteacher, Deputy Head, school caretaker and Office Manager have keys to access the grounds and buildings outside of normal school hours. They do so after being briefed by the headteacher and at their own risk.

The experience and training of all staff and the activities to be undertaken will be taken into consideration before allowing lone working. Lone workers must be considered capable of responding correctly in an emergency situation by the Headteacher. Whenever possible it is recommended that staff work with a colleague.

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

Staff should activate the door security system and lock the front entrance and all external doors when lone working and 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.

All lone working staff should establish their own checking in and out system with family, friends or work colleagues.

It is not normally practicable for the Headteacher or other line managers to periodically visit and visually monitor people working alone. Staff will receive information and/or training to help ensure they understand the risks associated with lone working and to minimise these risks.

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

Contractors should have access to their own first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries.

Whilst one of the school telephone handsets is wireless, the telephone reception is not guaranteed throughout the building or in the school grounds. The only guaranteed area the wireless handsets work is in the immediate vicinity of the school offices and the school kitchen. If staff rely on mobile phones they must ensure that their network has good reception within school. Although phones can give extra reassurance, they do not provide complete protection and staff should still be alert for their own personal safety at all times.

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.

Lone workers should not undertake activities that involve the handling of money, working at height, any task that has 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 working at height in an isolated building must follow Elm C of E Primary School Working at Height Procedures.

All school personnel are reminded about the importance of maintaining a healthy work/life balance and the school does not advocate working in the building in the evening or at weekends.

There are safeguarding risks associated with some forms of lone working. All adults must comply with the school's Code of Conduct for all Adults, particularly with regard to transportation of pupils, working in one-to-one situations and when meeting pupils. This includes meetings off-site and transportation of pupils. They must also abide by the school's Protocol for Children Not Collected from School.

Reporting

It is the responsibility of all school personnel and contractors to adhere to the lone working procedures and to report any difficulties, failure of equipment or general concerns on health and safety to the Headteacher and/or the school Office Manager.

It is the responsibility of all adults to apply the Whistle-blowing Policy in situations where safeguarding is in question.

If members of staff fail to follow procedures designed to protect their safety or the safety of others, including children, this could result in a disciplinary matter. This will also be taken into consideration for members of staff in the case of injury as failure to follow procedures could be regarded as having contributed to their injury and any compensation claims for damages or unfair dismissal may be reduced accordingly.

The School respects the right of the employee, under the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, to refuse to carry out work where there is a serious and imminent risk of danger. They also can advise others to do the same without being dismissed as a result. Staff should be proactive in bringing to the attention of Headteacher and/or Health and Safety Coordinator any aspect of work related risks.

The Headteacher and/or Health and Safety Governor will regularly monitor the implementation of these procedures. Following any incident an investigation will be carried out and its findings used to inform change to procedures and working practices.

Office Manager Duties

- Provide safe systems of work for all staff.
- Ensure that there are appropriate security systems in place to secure the building.
- Carry out personal risk assessments for all staff working alone.
- Identify any training needs and ensure these are met.
- Ensure that the staff members are suitable to be left working alone.

Procedures for Caretakers/Site Supervisors working alone on-site.

- Ensure premises and buildings are secure.
- During holiday periods, use sign-in app for other staff and ensure that they have left the building before locking up. Staff to text Headteacher to inform them they are going into school and when they have left.
- Hazardous jobs (e.g. working at height, using power tools, hazardous or flammable liquids) not to be undertaken. This list is not exhaustive. All jobs should be assessed for dangers and a decision made as to their suitability for lone-working.
- Use phone-in system above.
- When responding to alarm out-of-hours wait for Fire/Police and only respond with them or with another member of staff. Call 999, if there is any risk, however slight, and wait for assistance.
- If alarm does not set, do not leave the building unsecured. Telephone the CHUBB Security and the alarm company and wait for an engineer to restore the system.

Procedures for Cleaners working alone on site

- Lone working is the last resort
- Cleaner in charge to secure building on arrival
- Cleaner in charge to secure premises on arrival (all external gates to be locked as soon as possible).
- Mobile phones and contact for Premises staff and Leadership Team to be kept on person at all times.
- Cleaner in Charge to be aware of all cleaning staff and ensure that they have left safely at the end of each shift.
- Ensure all staff have left the building before locking and alarming the premises.
- If cleaning or locking up alone, ensure that phone-in system above is used and tasks undertaken are not hazardous.
- If alarm does not set, do not leave the building unsecured. Telephone the Site Supervisors and wait for assistance.

Procedures for home visits by school staff

- Consider paired working.
- Agree visit with Inclusion Manager or Line Manager.
- Mobile phone to be kept with member of staff at all times.
- Leave timings, address and contact details with a named person in the school office.
- Phone school office to confirm safe arrival.
- Use agreed password if situation is unsafe.
- School to telephone police if safe arrival call is not made or staff does not arrive back at school at the expected time.
- Risk assess each visit and situation. Always leave the home and telephone school with the agreed password if there is any risk. Phone 999 for serious risk.

Staff lone working with children during the school day one to one or small group with one member of staff

Staff should view spending time alone with children as an opportunity to develop individual positive adult / young person relationships. Staff should always inform another member of staff of their whereabouts and reason for lone working and leave the door of the room they are working in open to be transparent about their procedures and in order to be able to signal for help if necessary.

Staff are asked to pay particular attention to the following areas of risk:

- **Special Relationships:** It is beneficial for children to be involved in wholesome relationships with responsible adults, but exclusiveness and secrecy should be challenged;
- **Taking Children Home:** This is not allowed under any circumstances;
- **Physical Care:** There are clear guidelines about appropriate privacy boundaries. Young people should be encouraged to undertake personal care and hygiene activities for themselves as soon as appropriate for their age and level of development;
- **Access to Bedrooms on a home visit:** Staff should be mindful of young people's need for privacy, and situations, which could give rise to discomfort or misinterpretation.
- **Trips and Outings:** These should be dispersed among the staff group and subject to collective management approval. There should be careful monitoring when a pattern emerges, linking one member of staff with a particular child, or group of children;
- **Safeguarding:** As a part of their mandatory training Staff are expected to attend the company's safeguarding training which highlights best practice, risk management and safety issues when lone working with children.

Use of a Nominated Safety Partner or "Buddy" System

This is a fairly basic system to minimise the likelihood of an employee being left unaided should something untoward happen to them. Prior to anyone undertaking lone working, the following information should be made available to the nominated safety partner or buddy:

- Contact details e.g. mobile phone number

- Agreed contact times or intervals and planned codes, if appropriate
- Expected time of return, allowing for reasonably foreseeable delays such as traffic congestion, and the fact that meetings, more often than not, overrun rather than finish early
- Information on the route to be taken when travelling
- Colour, make and registration number of the vehicle being used
- Details of emergency personal contacts for elm C of E School

The lone worker should make contact with their safety partner at the agreed time or at agreed intervals to reassure them that they are OK. It is important that this includes arrangements for if the last “report in” is to be after normal office hours. Should the lone worker be delayed at any stage they should ensure that they contact their safety partner and revise their itinerary and expected return time. Should the lone worker fail to make contact the safety partner will try to contact the lone worker using the itinerary and other details provided by the lone worker. If contact can still not be made after a reasonable agreed length of time and the lone worker still has not reported in, then the Police should be contacted for advice.

