



# LONE WORKING POLICY

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This Lone Working Policy provides guidelines for the protection of pupils and staff in circumstances where it is necessary and/or appropriate for a single member of staff to look after one or more pupils on their own, in or outside school, for a specified period of time.

1.1.1. In addition, this Lone Working Policy provides guidelines for the protection of staff required to work alone in the school building.

1.1.2. In addition, this Lone Working Policy provides guidelines for the protection of staff required to work on their own outside school. For example, this includes visiting pupils and their parents/carers in their own home.

1.2. Hartmore School, in keeping with our philosophical and ethical approach, believes that 'Lone Working' is not merely acceptable, but in many circumstances is the most appropriate approach. However, Lone Working does require some built in safeguards for the protection of staff and pupils.

## 2. Risk Factors

2.1. In circumstances where Lone Working takes place (with pupils) there are inevitably risk factors that are unavoidable. These can be minimised and mitigated against, but not eliminated altogether. They include an increased risk of/additional challenges in managing:

- A pupil missing from school or a school activity
- A pupil being involved in an accident
- A member of staff being assaulted
- A pupil damaging property
- A pupil harming themselves
- A pupil being assaulted physically, emotionally, sexually
- A pupil making a false allegation of assault/abuse/inappropriate behaviour
- A pupil perpetrating a crime
- Inappropriate boundaries/collusion between staff member and a pupil

2.2. These factors should therefore, be considered (along with other relevant factors) prior to Lone Working with a pupil.

2.2.1. In some (though not all) circumstances it may be appropriate to complete a Risk Assessment relating to some or all of the factors listed above.

2.2.2. Such Risk Assessments, should build in specific additional safeguards e.g. time limited Lone Working, Lone Working limited to public spaces, specified members or staff etc.

2.3. In rare cases it may not be appropriate to work alone with a pupil at all. If this is the case, this should also be detailed in the individual Risk Assessment. Further this should be regarded as a temporary situation, with staff working towards a situation where Lone Working can occur safely.



2.4. In Lone Working circumstance staff where required to work alone in the school building, increased risk factors primarily relate to a greater chance of:

- Being taken ill or having an accident and being unable to summon help
- Being confronted by intruders

2.5. In Lone Working circumstance staff where required to be away from school alone and/or visit a pupil's home increased risk factors primarily relate to a greater chance of:

- Being taken ill or having an accident and being unable to inform colleagues
- Being subject to potential jeopardy or risk because of the behaviour of the pupil's parents/carer or others

### **3. General Safeguards**

3.1. Hartmore School maintains a high-staff to pupil ratio. Within the school building, no member of staff is ever more than a few seconds away from a colleague at any time during the school day.

3.2. All staff are recruited using Safer Recruitment processes, subject to an enhanced DBS check (Disclosure Barring Service) and verified references.

3.3. Staff notify each other prior and/or the Headteacher to any Lone Working event

3.4. Comprehensive Risk Assessments are completed and regularly reviewed.

3.5. Staff gauge the mood of the pupil prior to Lone Working, and make a safe decision (delaying the event if required).

3.6. All staff are regularly supervised by their line manager, during with specific strategies/risks in Lone Working should be discussed, as appropriate.

3.7. Health, Safety & Welfare Policy, Health, Safety & Welfare audits and regular maintenance of the fabric of the school reduce risk of accidents occurring when any member of staff is alone in the building.

3.8. All staff Lone Working (especially those outside of the school building or alone in the school building) are provided with mobile phones, in order to more easily communicate with colleagues and others in an emergency.

3.9. All staff are expected to undertake appropriate First Aid training.

### **4. Specific Safeguards**

4.1. Where there are additional risks, additional steps must be taken to minimise and mitigate against these.

4.2. For example, if a pupil has a history of aggressive behaviour towards staff, making unsupportable allegations or going missing, a Risk Assessment must detail the circumstances in which it is appropriate to undertake Lone Working, along with strategies to maximise safety. This is not to say that the presence of some level of risk does not, in of itself, prevent Lone Working being appropriate. All pupils, except in the most high risk circumstances, are entitled both to the potential

benefits of a one-to-one relationship with an adult, and the avoidance of any stigma associated with being unable to left alone with a single member of staff.

4.3. The context, arrangements, the purpose, the nature of the relationship with specific members of staff, gender factors (see below), particular circumstances regarding the time and location all influence when where and if Lone Working' is appropriate.

4.4. Occasionally, a pupil may develop an infatuation for one of their teachers. In an emotionally vulnerable stage of their development, such issues need to be managed with the greatest sensitivity. Among the issues to take into account in these circumstances is the appropriateness of Lone Working.

4.5. Very few risks are permanent. Pupils and circumstances change overtime. Therefore, all relevant Risk Assessments should, as a matter of course, be reviewed on a regular basis.

## 5. Gender Issues

5.1. It is truism that the risk of Lone Working with girls, all things being equal, is reduced if undertaken by female staff. However, this does not, in of itself, remove all risk. Further, this convention does not necessarily need to apply in all cases. It is of positive benefit if pupils learn to relate equally to male and female teaching staff.

## 6. Working Alone Away from the School Building

6.1. Staff are expected to work away from the school on a regular basis, both with and without pupils. This section details some of these increased risks, along with recommended action to mitigate them.

6.2. Whilst some risk is always present, generally and specifically to Lone Working, risk is increased outside of the controlled environment of the school building. Obviously these increased risks are different in different cases. However, there are number of common factors the can increase risk, a sample of which follows.

6.3. Increased risks and challenges associated with a sole member of staff undertaking activities with a pupil away from the school include:

- Staff being taken ill, injured or otherwise incapacitated
- Road Safety
- A pupil running away and going missing
- Managing emotionally dysregulated behaviour (including physical aggression)
- Difficulties in physically intervening on own (and potentially humiliating the pupil in public)
- A pupil harming themselves, putting themselves in danger, or being reckless with theirs or other safety

6.3.1. Mitigating these risks require high-levels of planning, preparation, communication and good professional judgement.

6.4. Staff should not lone work two or more pupils when engaged in a potentially risky activity when away from the school building.

6.5. Staff working away from the school building must also be cognisant of some areas of specific, increased risk.

6.5.1. Staff attending meetings with parents/carers at their home (especially with relatively unknown parents/carers) must take additional care in order to ensure their own safety and welfare. They should:

- Let colleagues know in advance the time, location, planned duration and the likely attendees
- Ensure they have a mobile phone with adequate battery life
- Inform colleagues after they have left the meeting
- Have a clear idea where they are going and how to find the venue (including nearby parking)
- Leave the meeting immediately if their safety or welfare is in any way compromised
- Take care walking from vehicle to venue, especially in unfamiliar areas after dark
- If high levels of risk exist, do not attend meetings on own (or arrange meetings in a public place)

## 7. Working Alone within the School Building

7.1. Staff may find themselves working in the school alone, both before and after the normal school day, and/or during holiday periods. This section details some of these increased risks associated with this, along with recommended action to mitigate them.

7.2. It should be said that Hartmore School is a very safe environment. It is located in a rural, low-crime area. However, it is an isolated building, and this needs to be taken into an account.

7.2.1. If a Risk Assessment indicates a moderate risk or above of Lone Working, staff should not be alone in the school with that pupil. If a child's lift home is late arriving, they are unable to attend a school trip etc., two members of staff should be with them.

7.3. When working alone in the school building staff should:

- Inform colleagues and/or family of where they are and the approximate time of planned departure
- Ensure they are always near a telephone, in case of emergency
- Undertake no work from height (see Health, Safety & Welfare Policy)
- Undertake no high-risk work e.g. work involving electricity

7.4. In case of a **FIRE** and/or the sounding of the Fire Alarm staff working alone in the building should follow all and any specific risk assessments, especially fire risk assessments. In particular they should:

- NEVER attempt to tackle anything but the most innocuous fire
- If it safe to do so, check the Fire Panel
- Swiftly and carefully exit the building to the Fire Assembly point
- Summon the Emergency Services
- Contact the Headteacher and/or designated deputy

7.5.1 In the case of a fire occurring at Hartmore Genesis, the above should be followed. However, staff in the adjacent Alison House must also be notified immediately.

## 8. Cleaning, Maintenance & Grounds Staff

8.1. Not only are cleaning, maintenance and grounds staff required to work alone at the school building, (both directly employed staff and contractors) but some of their work necessarily requires managing and mitigating some specific hazards.

8.1.1. There is possibly slight increase in the frequency of accidents when working alone. However, the more concerning factor is that having an accident alone significantly increases the potential severity of that accident. It is much more difficult to manage the consequences of an accident when there is an uninjured colleague with you than when alone. As such, anyone working alone should further minimise risks.

8.2. No activity involving moderate or above risk should be undertaken unless a specific Risk Assessment covering this activity being undertaken alone.

8.3. Staff should not undertake no work from height when alone (see Health, Safety & Welfare Policy).

8.4. Particular care (and a specific Risk Assessment) should be taken if using power tools or other machinery when alone.

8.5. Particular care (and a specific Risk Assessment) should be taken if using substances hazardous to health when alone.

8.6. The school cleaner undertakes much of her work alone in the school building. As such, particular precautions need to be taken.

8.6.1. She is expected to notify a family member her expected time of departure. Her next of kin should be provided with the emergency contact details of school keyholders.

8.6.1. She is expected to carry a mobile telephone/have easy access to a landline.

8.6.2. She should not work at height when alone (see Health, Safety & Welfare Policy).

8.7. In case of In case of a **FIRE** and/or the sounding of the Fire Alarm *Section 7.4.* should be followed, along with appropriate fire risk assessments.

## 9. Therapy Sessions in School

9.1. Some pupils have therapy (counselling, speech therapy etc.) sessions both within the school day, and shortly thereafter. These take place, usually in the dedicated room on the school-site.

9.2. It is axiomatic to say that individual therapy sessions take place with a pupil and a lone worker. In therapy sessions many of the same general safeguards detailed in above apply. Further therapists, should always ensure their colleagues are aware of the time, location and planned duration of the sessions being undertaken.



9.3. No one should undertake therapy unless a Session Engagement Plan is in place. All therapists working at Hartmore School are they are appropriately qualified, registered and receive regular supervision.

## **10. General issues**

10.1. It is essential for good therapeutic relationships that defensive and negative thinking around the issue of Lone Working does not promote highly risk-averse practise. One-to-one working with pupils should be consider entirely unnoteworthy. It is entirely acceptable and to work alone in the kitchen, the school library, on school trips and activities away from the school.

8.2. This does mean to say safeguards as detailed above should not be considered. However, it does mean that actual risk must be established before lone-working is restricted in anyway.

## **11. Policy Review**

11.1. This Lone Working Policy was last reviewed in October 2022 and will be reviewed again in September 2024.