



LONE WORKING POLICY

Policy date: September 2026
Review date: September 2029
Approved by: Governing Body

1. INTRODUCTION

St Mary's R.C. Primary School recognises that there are occasions when the school caretaker may be required to work alone on the school premises, particularly after the majority of staff and pupils have left the school site.

The school has a duty to take reasonable and practicable steps to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees who work alone.

This policy sets out the arrangements that will apply when the caretaker is working alone, particularly during the period after the school day when the caretaker may be the only member of staff on site.

The policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Health and Safety Policy;
- Risk Assessment Policy;
- Fire Safety arrangements;
- Emergency Procedures;
- First Aid Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- Working at Height arrangements;
- Manual Handling arrangements; and
- Accident Reporting procedures.

The school will ensure that lone-working arrangements are reviewed where there is a change in circumstances, following an accident or near miss, or where the existing arrangements are found to be ineffective.

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to:

- identify the risks associated with lone working;
 - establish safe working arrangements for the caretaker;
 - ensure that the caretaker has appropriate means of communication;
 - ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to respond if the caretaker becomes ill, injured or unable to contact the school;
 - identify activities that must **not** be undertaken alone;
 - provide clear procedures for emergencies;
 - ensure that the caretaker knows when and how to obtain assistance;
 - provide appropriate monitoring and contact arrangements; and
 - ensure that lone working does not place the caretaker or others at unnecessary risk.
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3. WHO IS A LONE WORKER?

For the purposes of this policy, a lone worker is an employee who works without close or direct supervision or without another worker being present who could provide assistance if required.

At St Mary's, this will particularly apply to the caretaker when working on the school premises after other staff have left.

The caretaker's normal working day will finish at **5:45pm**, **this is to coincide with the finish of the After School club, when two other members of staff will be onsite.**

Where the caretaker is required to work beyond 5:45pm, this should normally be agreed in advance with the Headteacher or Business Manager and additional consideration should be given to the risks associated with remaining on site alone.

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The school will take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that the caretaker is able to work safely when alone.

The caretaker must:

- follow the school's health and safety procedures;
- undertake only work for which they have been appropriately trained;
- use equipment in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and school procedures;
- report hazards, defects and unsafe working conditions;
- keep the school informed of any concerns regarding lone working;
- carry a charged mobile phone when working alone;
- ensure that doors, gates and other access points are secured appropriately;
- maintain awareness of their surroundings;
- avoid unnecessary risks;
- never undertake work which has been identified as unsuitable for lone working; and
- leave the premises promptly when their duties are complete.

The caretaker must not feel under pressure to complete a task if they believe that doing so would place them at risk.

5. NORMAL END OF DAY ARRANGEMENTS

The caretaker's normal finishing time is **5:45pm**.

Before leaving the school premises, the caretaker should complete the agreed end-of-day security and premises checks.

These may include:

- checking designated areas of the building;
- ensuring external doors are secure;
- checking windows where required;
- checking that areas of the school are appropriately closed;
- checking that heating, lighting and equipment are left in accordance with school procedures;
- checking that no pupils, visitors or contractors remain on site unexpectedly;
- checking the site for obvious hazards;
- securing gates and other access points;
- activating the school's alarm/security system as required; and
- ensuring the premises are securely locked before leaving.

The caretaker should not undertake unnecessary additional tasks once the school is empty.

6. CONTACT AND CHECK-IN ARRANGEMENTS

Because the caretaker may be working alone, the school will maintain an appropriate means of communication.

The caretaker must have access to a **fully charged mobile telephone** while working alone.

The Headteacher/Business Manager will ensure that appropriate contact details are available to the caretaker.

Where appropriate, the school may operate a simple check-in procedure.

For example:

5:45pm – normal finishing time

The caretaker should notify the designated school contact if they are required to remain on site beyond 5:45pm.

If the caretaker is expected to remain on site after 5:45pm, an agreed check-in time should be established.

If the caretaker fails to make the agreed contact, the designated member of staff should attempt to contact them.

If contact cannot be established, appropriate steps should be taken depending on the circumstances and the length of time since contact was expected.

The school should not rely solely on an assumption that the caretaker has safely left the premises. HSE guidance specifically recommends arrangements that confirm the lone worker's whereabouts and safe completion of work.

7. EMERGENCY CONTACT

The caretaker must have access to emergency contact information.

This should include:

- Headteacher;
- Business Manager;
- nominated senior member of staff;
- emergency services – **999**;
- school address;
- utility emergency contact information where appropriate; and
- relevant contractor/emergency maintenance contacts.

The caretaker should be aware of the school's procedures for:

- fire;
- intruders;
- serious injury;
- sudden illness;
- suspected gas leak;
- electrical emergency;
- water leak/flood;
- serious building damage;
- security alarm activation; and
- any other significant emergency.

8. EMERGENCY PROCEDURE – ILLNESS OR INJURY

If the caretaker becomes unwell or injured while working alone, they should:

1. Stop work immediately.
 2. Move to a safe location if possible.
 3. Contact the designated school contact.
 4. Call **999** where the situation is serious or life-threatening.
 5. Provide the emergency services with the school's full address and details of the incident.
 6. Not attempt to continue working if they are unable to do so safely.
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9. FIRE

If the fire alarm sounds or the caretaker discovers a fire, they must follow the school's fire evacuation procedure.

The caretaker must:

- raise the alarm;
- call **999** where appropriate;
- evacuate the building;
- not put themselves at risk attempting to extinguish a fire;
- go to the designated assembly point; and
- not re-enter the building until authorised by the emergency services.

The caretaker must never remain inside the building to attempt to deal with a significant fire.

10. INTRUDERS OR SUSPICIOUS PERSONS

The caretaker should not confront or physically challenge an intruder.

If an unknown or suspicious person is on site:

- the caretaker should move to a safe location;
- doors should be secured where this can be done safely;
- the caretaker should contact the police where necessary;
- **999** should be used where there is an immediate threat to safety;
- the Headteacher or designated school contact should be informed as soon as practicable.

The caretaker should not place themselves at risk by attempting to investigate unusual noises or suspected intruders.

11. WORK THAT MUST NOT BE UNDERTAKEN ALONE

The following activities must not be undertaken by the caretaker alone unless a specific risk assessment and safe system of work has confirmed that the activity can be undertaken safely:

Working at height

The caretaker must not undertake high-risk work at height while alone.

In particular, the caretaker must not:

- access roofs;
- work from unsafe ladders;

- use improvised access equipment;
- undertake work requiring another person to assist with rescue; or
- carry out work where a fall could result in serious injury.

This is particularly important given the serious risks associated with falls from height. HSE has recently prosecuted a school trust following a serious fall involving a site supervisor undertaking an unsafe roof-related task.

Electrical work

The caretaker must not undertake electrical work beyond their level of competence and authorisation.

Electrical work requiring a qualified electrician must be referred to an appropriately competent person.

Confined spaces

The caretaker must not enter a confined space while working alone.

Heavy lifting

The caretaker must not attempt to lift or move items that cannot safely be handled by one person.

Dangerous equipment

Machinery or equipment presenting a significant risk must not be used while lone working unless it has been specifically assessed and the caretaker has received appropriate training.

Contractors

The caretaker should not permit contractors to undertake high-risk work without appropriate arrangements being in place.

12. MANUAL HANDLING

The caretaker must assess any manual-handling task before undertaking it.

Where an item is:

- too heavy;
- too large;
- awkward;
- unstable; or
- otherwise difficult to move safely,

the caretaker must obtain assistance or use suitable mechanical equipment.

The caretaker must never attempt to move an object simply because there is nobody else available to help.

13. CHEMICALS AND CLEANING PRODUCTS

The caretaker must follow the school's COSHH arrangements.

Chemicals must:

- be appropriately labelled;
- be stored securely;
- only be used for their intended purpose;
- be used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions; and
- not be mixed unless specifically permitted by the manufacturer's instructions and COSHH assessment.

High-risk chemical activities should not be undertaken while lone working where the risk assessment identifies a need for assistance or emergency support.

14. SECURITY OF THE PREMISES

Once the school is empty, the caretaker should ensure that the premises remain secure.

The caretaker should:

- keep external doors secure;
- avoid unnecessarily opening the premises to members of the public;
- challenge unknown persons only where this can be done safely;
- not allow unauthorised persons access to the school;
- report suspicious activity to the Headteacher or police as appropriate; and
- follow the school's alarm and key-holder procedures.

Keys, access codes and security information must not be disclosed to unauthorised persons.

15. WORKING OUTSIDE NORMAL HOURS

The caretaker should normally finish work at **5:45pm**.

If work needs to continue beyond this time:

- the Headteacher or Business Manager should be informed;

- the reason for the extended working period should be established;
- appropriate lone-working arrangements should be confirmed;
- the caretaker should maintain telephone contact;
- an agreed check-in time should be established where appropriate; and
- the caretaker should not undertake higher-risk work simply because they are remaining on site later.

If the caretaker is regularly required to work beyond 5:45pm, the school should review the working arrangements and risk assessment.

16. VISITORS AND CONTRACTORS AFTER SCHOOL

Where contractors or visitors attend the school after normal school hours, the caretaker should follow the school's arrangements for signing in, identification and safeguarding.

The caretaker should not permit unknown individuals to enter the premises.

Where a contractor is undertaking high-risk work, the school must ensure that appropriate risk assessments, method statements and competent supervision are in place.

17. PERSONAL SAFETY

The caretaker should take reasonable steps to protect their own personal safety.

They should:

- keep their mobile phone with them;
 - avoid working in isolated areas unnecessarily;
 - maintain suitable lighting;
 - use appropriate personal protective equipment;
 - report any concerns about personal safety;
 - avoid confrontation;
 - not take unnecessary risks; and
 - leave the premises if they reasonably believe that remaining would place them at risk.
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18. TRAINING

The school will ensure that the caretaker receives appropriate information, instruction and training for their duties.

This may include:

- health and safety;
- fire safety;
- emergency procedures;
- first aid arrangements;
- manual handling;
- working at height;
- COSHH;
- use of work equipment;
- security procedures;
- lone-working procedures; and
- safeguarding awareness.

19. RISK ASSESSMENT

The school will ensure that the risks associated with lone working are considered within its health and safety risk assessment arrangements.

The risk assessment should consider:

- the tasks undertaken;
- the location of the work;
- working hours;
- access and escape routes;
- foreseeable emergencies;
- the caretaker's level of training and experience;
- equipment used;
- working at height;
- manual handling;
- chemicals;
- electrical equipment;
- potential contact with members of the public;
- violence or aggression;
- fire;
- sudden illness or injury;
- communication arrangements; and
- the effectiveness of supervision and check-in arrangements.

The risk assessment will be reviewed:

- at least annually;
- following an accident or near miss;

- following a significant change in working arrangements;
- following changes to the premises or equipment;
- where new hazards are identified; or
- where the existing controls are found to be ineffective.

HSE confirms that there is no requirement for a completely separate statutory "lone working risk assessment", but risks to lone workers must be identified and controlled through the school's risk assessment arrangements.

20. RESPONSIBILITIES

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that:

- suitable lone-working arrangements are established;
- appropriate risk assessments are completed;
- the caretaker receives appropriate information and training;
- concerns raised by the caretaker are addressed;
- appropriate emergency procedures are in place; and
- this policy is reviewed.

Business Manager

The Business Manager will support the Headteacher by:

- monitoring the effectiveness of the arrangements;
- ensuring appropriate maintenance and security systems are in place;
- arranging appropriate contractor support;
- ensuring relevant risk assessments are reviewed; and
- acting as a designated contact for the caretaker where appropriate.

Caretaker

The caretaker is responsible for:

- following this policy;
 - following risk assessments and safe systems of work;
 - using equipment safely;
 - maintaining communication while lone working;
 - reporting hazards and defects;
 - reporting accidents and near misses;
 - seeking assistance where necessary;
 - refusing to undertake work where they believe it is unsafe; and
 - ensuring that the school is secure before leaving.
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21. ACCIDENTS AND NEAR MISSES

All accidents, injuries, dangerous occurrences and near misses must be reported in accordance with the school's accident reporting procedures.

Particular attention should be given to incidents involving:

- falls;
- slips and trips;
- manual handling;
- equipment;
- chemicals;
- electrical systems;
- violence or aggression;
- security incidents; and
- incidents occurring while the caretaker was working alone.

Any incident may require the school's lone-working risk assessment to be reviewed.

22. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The effectiveness of the lone-working arrangements will be monitored by the Headteacher and Business Manager.

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner where circumstances change.

The school will consult with the caretaker when reviewing the arrangements, as their practical experience of lone working is an important part of identifying hazards and determining suitable controls.

23. KEY PRINCIPLE

No task is so urgent that the caretaker should put themselves at unnecessary risk.

Where a task cannot be completed safely while working alone, the caretaker must stop and seek assistance.