Lone Working Policy

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LONE WORKING POLICY

1. Introduction

Veritas Multi Academy Trust recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves, without close or direct supervision, sometimes in isolated work areas or out of office hours.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, an Employer has a duty of care to advise and assess risk for workers when they work by themselves in these circumstances.

However, employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work.

Lone working is not inherently unsafe and proper precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone.

Staff should not meet visitors and parent/carers alone.

This policy applies to both teaching and support staff, so that some lone working arrangements may be more suitable than others for different individuals.

2. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all situations involving lone working arising in connection with the duties and activities of all staff. This includes temporary workers, visiting staff and those employed on a casual basis. It should be read in conjunction with the school's Health & Safety Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define lone workers as those 'who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'. 'Lone workers' includes:

Those working at their main place of work where:

- Only one person is working on the premises, e.g. site managers
- People work separately from each other, e.g. in different locations
- People working outside normal hours, e.g. cleaners

Those working away from their fixed base where:

- One worker is visiting another agency's premises or meeting venue
- One worker is working from their own home

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

1. 1:1 working for teaching assistants, career advisers, mentors and school/college counsel
2. Teaching assistants working alone with small groups of students away from the main classroom or being on their own while providing playground supervision
3. Teachers / Cover supervisors being responsible for whole-class supervision on their own
4. Support staff being left on their own to supervise classes during wet play periods
   Support staff being left on their own to supervise students in exclusion rooms
5. Support staff providing personal care for pupils, such as administering first aid or medication, or assisting with toileting needs
6. Support staff required to put up displays on their own
7. Office and maintenance staff being left on their own on premises during parts of the day and some holiday and school closure periods

3. Aims:

The aim of the policy is to:

- Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working and highlighting the risks / scenarios where lone working may take place, as listed above and below:
- Ensure that the risk of lone working is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable
- Ensure that appropriate support and training is available to all staff that equips them to recognise risk and provides practical advice on safety when working alone
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents relating to lone working
- Reduce the number of incidents and injuries to staff related to lone working

Risks

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

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

4. Responsibilities:

The Headteacher (school) Trust Business Manager (Trust) is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy.
- Ensuring that staff groups and individuals identified as being at risk are given appropriate information, instruction and training, including training at induction, and updating and refreshing this training as necessary.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risks associated with lone working.
- Providing resources for putting the policy into practice.
- Managing the effectiveness of preventative measures through a robust system of reporting, investigating and recording incidents.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for monitoring incidents linked to lone working and that the effectiveness of this policy is regularly reviewed.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident.

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Taking all possible steps to ensure that lone workers are at no greater risk than other employees.

- Identifying situations where people work alone and deciding whether systems can be adopted to avoid workers carrying out tasks on their own.
- Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly.
- Putting procedures and safe systems of work into practice which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to staff involved in any incident.

Employees are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their actions.
- Following guidance and procedures designed for safe working.
- Reporting all incidents that may affect the health and safety of themselves or other and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy.
- Reporting any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone through the agreed Trust/school processes.
- Seeking the permission of the Headteacher or Trust Business Manager before working alone on the school premises outside normal school hours.
- Ensuring they do not arrange meetings with parents or members of the public when lone working. Meetings must be arranged during school occupancy times, or when there are other members of staff on site.
- Ensuring a risk assessment in place for the employee, before commencing lone working and are aware of risks and how to reduce them.

5. Guidance for risk assessments of lone working

Full guidelines of Risk Assessment process can be found in Health and Safety Policy

(the following examples are not an exhaustive list of scenarios)

- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- Are there adequate channels of communication in an emergency?
- Does the workplace or task present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Has safe travelling between appointments been arranged?
- Have reporting and recording arrangements been made where appropriate?
- Can the whereabouts of the lone worker be traced?

6. Good Practice for Lone Workers

- During their working hours, all staff leaving the workplace (or home) should leave written details of where they are going and their estimated time of arrival back at school.
- If, during a trip away from school, plans change significantly, this should be communicated back to the school office.
- Telephone contact between the lone worker and a colleague may also be advisable.
- Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries.
- Lone workers should have access to a phone and other personal safety equipment where this is necessary.
- Dependant on circumstances and agreed with manager beforehand?

7. Monitoring Safety Issues

Lone workers must report incidents such as accidents and near misses, including all incidents where they feel threatened according to agreed processes within schools.

Line managers will ask staff working on their own whether there are any safety concerns that are not being addressed. Lone workers are encouraged to seek help and advice if any safety concerns arise.

8. Legislation and links to other policies:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Health and Safety and Policy
- Trust wellbeing Objectives
- People Development Policy
- Code of Conduct