

Independent Person Policy

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Introduction

The name of this document has been updated to reflect the change in the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS) published in September 2022 specific to Standard 11.4. Formally known as 'Independent Listener', documents and posters will henceforth refer to an 'Independent Person' although the practical use of *Listener* and *Person* will be considered indistinguishable and interchangeable at Guildhouse School for the foreseeable future. This is because 'Independent Listener' is known nomenclature within our environment and changing it after it has been introduced to students presents a material risk of confusion.

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS) require that at least one person other than a parent, member of staff and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school.

The Independent Person provides a confidential listening service. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where safeguarding concerns, risk of harm or other circumstances require information to be shared in accordance with safeguarding procedures. The Independent Person will normally visit the school and/or boarding provision at least annually to maintain visibility and accessibility to boarders. Any student who wishes to talk to an independent adult about personal problems or concerns at school can do so. Students will be informed of the Independent Person:

- during induction;
- through boarding notices;
- via student handbooks;
- through boarding staff reminders during the year;

The current Independent Person's name and contact details will be displayed within school handbooks, school noticeboards, boarding accommodation and other locations accessible to boarders.

Information about external support organisations such as Childline, NSPCC, Children's Commissioner and local safeguarding services will also be available.

Role Context

The Independent Person must be student focused however sympathetic they may be to other points of view. The function is to complement the work and activities of school staff and parents.

In bringing this autonomous perspective, the Independent Person must behave in an anti-discriminatory manner. The Independent Person is not expected to accept unquestioningly what those responsible for the student tell them is in the student's interests but should remain open-minded and foster a healthy scepticism. The Independent Person cannot guarantee confidentiality.

Information shared by a student will normally remain private unless:

- there is concern that a child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering harm;
- a criminal offence may have occurred;
- another person may be at risk;

- safeguarding procedures require information to be shared.

In such circumstances information will be shared with the DSL or relevant external agencies.

Problems and Decisions

The Independent Person will consult and work primarily with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Boarding Staff. They will work within school policies and procedures. All grievances or disputes should follow the procedures and guidance within the applicable school policy.

Any records kept and made should be:

- factual;
- dated;
- securely stored;
- shared with the DSL where safeguarding concerns arise.

Supervision

The Independent Person will have access to appropriate professional support and supervision arrangements. These may include independent external supervision, peer support networks or consultation with safeguarding professionals.

Job Description

OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE

As described within the National Minimum Standards for Boarding the Independent Person is a person outside the staff and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who students may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school.

REPORTS TO

The Independent Person works in liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and within the safeguarding and welfare framework established by the school.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ROLE

In consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, you will:

- At all times work in the best interests of the student
- If contacted by a student, provide an opportunity for them to talk through problems and issues in a safe and non-discriminatory manner
- Encourage the students to participate in decisions affecting them
- Keep accurate and confidential records bearing in mind that some students wish to remain anonymous
- Provide feedback to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for reports, reviews and other meetings

- Work in a student-centred manner, being clear about confidentiality and where boundaries lie
- Take into account the school's views on the student's needs, as well as the student's wishes and views

SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Know the identity of the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Proactively be alert to indicators of potential safeguarding issues
- Be aware of the school's Safeguarding Policy and to follow its requirements
- Attend training relating to Safeguarding provided by the school as required
- Undertake safeguarding training provided by the school and maintain awareness of current safeguarding themes, online harms, child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, AI-related risks and other emerging safeguarding concerns
- The Independent Person will be provided with contact details for the DSL, deputy DSLs, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and relevant children's social care services.
- Safeguarding and child protection issues arising from conversations with students should be reported immediately. This may be a direct referral, or concerns may be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Engage in safe practice and professional conduct to safeguard students to mitigate against the potential for misunderstandings or situations being misconstrued
- The school is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of students and expect the same from its volunteers, employees and representatives

DURATION

The initial arrangement will be for a period of 12 months. After which time the Independent Person will be expected to provide an anonymised summary of contacts from students during that period.

After 12 months the arrangement will be reviewed by the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. However, if for any reason you are unable to continue with the role you should contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Appointment and Vetting

The Independent Person will be appointed following appropriate safeguarding and suitability checks in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the School's Safer Recruitment Policy.

These checks will normally include:

- Enhanced DBS clearance;
- Identity verification;
- Verification of suitability for the role;
- Appropriate references;

- Any other checks required by safeguarding legislation or school procedures.

FOR REFERENCE

The Independent Person is expected to work in accordance with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools;
- The School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Online Safety Policy where relevant.

Monitoring and Review

The DSL and Head will review annually:

- accessibility of the Independent Person;
- number and themes of contacts (anonymised);
- effectiveness of arrangements;
- student awareness of the role.

Such findings may inform boarding and safeguarding self-evaluation.



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