

Independent Listeners Policy (for all pupils and boarders)

Written By	Deputy Head Pastoral, Director of Boarding
Ratified by Governors	(Lent Term)
Date For Review	November 2021
ISI Codes	B10, B17
NMS	2.2, 2.3

This should be read in conjunction with A14 and B16 – Pupils’ Complaint Procedure

This policy is applicable to all pupils and boarders including those in the EYFS.

The school has a system whereby any child who wishes to talk to an independent adult can do so. There are currently two adults who have taken up this role and their details are displayed in the boarding houses and around school in classrooms and public places. They are the chaplains of Sherborne School and Sherborne School for Girls. This is a confidential system and the independent visitors are under no obligation to inform the school of any calls. The school also has access to:

- Dr. David Campbell (01935 810 498 / 07402 633 600 / david.campbell@sherborne.org)
- Reverend Katie Windle (07834 762 742 / revkwindle@gmail.com)
- Childline: 0800 1111

ISI: (0300 123 1231)

The Children’s Rights Director, Mr Roger Morgan (0800 528 0731)

Independent Listeners

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Standards (NMS) requires schools to appoint an independent listener, as a possible ‘safety valve’ for pupils with concerns or problems.

The following procedure is to be followed in any appointment:

1. Appointment procedures to follow the NMS Staff recruitment standards (NMS Standard 14)
2. This is to be followed by an appropriate job description and briefing / induction
3. The position, which is an unpaid and voluntary role, is independent of the main lines of school management, but still subject to the school’s specification and organisation
4. The needs to be an awareness of perception of other roles held (e.g. governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary)

5. The position is subject to the usual child protection, welfare and 'whistle-blowing' requirements
6. If required, there must be carefully-planned access for pupils – time / place, ease of access, risks assessed and recorded
7. There must be clear rules on confidentiality – and duty to breach if informed of welfare risk to pupil or other pupils; no absolute guarantees of secrecy
8. Brief on specific situations – e.g. bullying, drugs
9. Clarify relationship with his / her own other professional expectations and codes – religious, medical
10. Extent of awareness amongst pupils – person, role, rules, access
11. Double feedback – from independent listener regarding general welfare issues raised (not specific instances), from pupils regarding the service and access to it.
12. Independent listener's knowledge of 'school norms and expectations' - current issues, National Minimum Standards.

Role and Job Description:

1. The Independent Listener will act as a confidential and supportive adult to students who wish to discuss concerns or worries. In a similar way to any member of staff, confidentiality cannot be maintained in a case where there is concern for the welfare or safety of the student (or others) as a consequence of any discussion with the Independent Listener. In these situations the Independent Listener should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Annie Gent), or, in specific situations as detailed in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the LADO team or the Police.
2. Other than as set out above, there is no requirement for the Independent Listener to report to the School any of the conversations they have with students. However:
 - a. The Independent Listener, with explicit agreement from/at the request of a student, may contact the School to share specific details or raise particular concerns.
 - b. At their discretion, the Independent Listener can report to the Deputy Head Pastoral or Headmaster generic information such as the number of calls they receive.
3. The Independent Listener will visit the school on occasion, Covid 19 permitting, familiarise themselves with the children. Both Listeners take services for the Prep pupils.
4. There will be no expectation that the Independent Listener make themselves available in person for face-face meetings with the pupils.

Appointment of the Independent Listener

The following procedure is to be followed in appointing the Independent Listener:

- The School will follow the normal recruitment policy in line with current legislation, National Minimum Standards for Boarding, ISI regulations and KCSiE 2020 guidance, including appropriate checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- The Independent Listener will be included in the Single Central Register.
- The Independent Listener will be subject to the School's policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, and Whistleblowing.
- The School will make it clear that the position, which is an unpaid and voluntary role, is to support the pupils and lies outside the School management structure.
- The School will be aware of the Independent Listener's other roles and experience (e.g. police officer, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary).
- The School will be aware of the Independent Listener's own other professional expectations and codes (e.g. religious, medical, counselling).
- The School will make clear to the Independent Listener the rules on confidentiality – especially their duty to breach confidentiality if informed of a safeguarding risk to students.
- The School will ensure that, alongside their understanding of the supportive pastoral structures in place within the School, students are aware of the role of Independent Listener including the rules on confidentiality.