

INDEPENDENT PERSON POLICY

The School believes that the house system at Tonbridge provides equality of opportunity through a caring environment in which each individual, with support, mutual respect and encouragement of members of staff and of other boys, is valued and is allowed to develop his own personality and talents while learning to live as part of a community. We aim to ensure that this community is one in which there is no place for harassment, discrimination or bullying.

Each boy has a number of different adults to whom he may turn for advice and support including his Housemaster, Tutor or Matron in the House, or the Chaplain or a trusted teacher. Further, all boys are made aware that the School Counsellor is available to see them in confidence and is in School for 4 ½ days a week. The Medical Centre staff are available 24 hours a day during term-time and a School doctor is on duty every weekday morning. Boys may make confidential appointments with a School doctor or with any other doctor at the local practice (Warders Medical Centre).

We place great emphasis on Pastoral care and feel that the systems in place to support the welfare of the boys are robust. However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a boy wishes to speak with someone who is not part of the School. Further, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (2022) states: *“The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the ‘independent person’. Children know who this person is, know how to contact them and feel comfortable talking to them. The person is easily accessible..”*. Tonbridge School has a volunteer Independent Person who acts in this capacity.

Tonbridge School’s Current Independent Person is:

Mr Jason Livingstone

Contact details: Mobile telephone: 07703 981820

Email: Info@jasonlivingstonecounselling.co.uk

These contact details are displayed on House noticeboards alongside those of the Children’s Commissioner, Childline and ISI.

Mr Livingstone is a qualified counsellor but it is important to note that, in his role as Independent Person, he will not be actively counselling boys. Rather, he will act as a supportive adult and active Person who may, in appropriate circumstances, suggest to a boy the next steps he may wish to consider.

ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT PERSON

- I. The Independent Person will act as a confidential and supportive adult to boys in the School who wish to discuss concerns or worries.
 - a. In a similar way to any member of staff, including the School Counsellor, confidentiality cannot be maintained in a case where there is concern for the welfare or safety of the boy (or others) as a consequence of any discussion with the Independent Person. In these situations the Independent Person should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (the Deputy Head Pastoral) or, in specific situations as detailed in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the KCC LADO team or the Police.

2. Other than as set out in 1.a. above, there is no requirement for the Independent Person to report to the School any of the conversations they have with boys. However:
 - a. The Independent Person, with explicit agreement from/at the request of a boy, may contact the School to share specific details or raise particular concerns.
 - b. At their discretion, the Independent Person can report to the Deputy Head Pastoral generic information such as the number of calls they receive.
3. The Independent Person will visit the School on occasion, have lunch with the boys in their Houses and familiarise themselves with the School on an informal basis.
4. There will be no expectation that the Independent Person make themselves available in person for face-face meetings with the boys.

APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT PERSON

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

- The School will follow the normal recruitment policy in line with current legislation, National Minimum Standards for Boarding, ISI regulations and KCSIE guidance, including appropriate checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- The Independent Person will be included in the Single Central Register.
- The Independent Person will be subject to the School's policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, and Whistleblowing.
- This document will be provided to the Independent Person as a job description.
- The Independent Person will be provided with an induction which will include safeguarding and child protection training as well as a discussion of the ethos, aims and pastoral care of the School.
- The School will make it clear that the position, which is an unpaid and voluntary role, is to support the boarding boys, in particular, and lies outside the School management structure.
- The School will be aware of the Independent Person's other roles and experience (e.g. police officer, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary).
- The School will be aware of the Independent Person's own other professional expectations and codes (e.g. religious, medical, counselling).
- The School will make clear to the Independent Person the rules on confidentiality – especially their duty to breach confidentiality if informed of a safeguarding risk to a boy or boys.
- The School will ensure that, alongside their understanding of the supportive pastoral structures in place within the School, boys are aware of the role of Independent Person including the rules on confidentiality.