

TASIS



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

Independent Listener Policy & Role Description

This policy applies to the whole school including Boarding and the Early Years.
The current version of any policy, procedure, protocol or guideline is the version held on the TASIS website. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that they are following the current version.

Document

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Agreed by:

Head of School	Chair of the Board
Bryan Nixon	Fernando Gonzalez
01 September 2020	01 September 2020

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1. Description

- 1.1. **Role Description:** As described within the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools s2.3. The Independent Listener is a person outside the staff and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school (Ref: NMS 2.3).
- 1.2. **Reports to:** Director of Boarding

2. Introduction

- 2.1. TASIS has a system whereby any child who wishes to talk to an independent adult about personal problems or concerns at school can do so. Details of Independent Listeners are displayed around the School and within all boarding houses and dormitories.
- 2.2. The Independent Listener system is confidential and Independent Listeners are under no obligation to inform the School of any calls. Independent Listeners will also visit the School a number of times throughout the year to make themselves known to staff and boarding students.
- 2.3. The role of Independent Listener is expected to follow all policies and procedures driven by the *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, (DfE, September 2018 – all parts), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, (DfE, July 2018) and the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* (DfE 2015).
- 2.4. It is a fundamental value of the school that we help our students to remain healthy, enabling them to continue to access their education without stigma or exclusion. Hence all staff at TASIS England are committed to ensuring our students are safe and feel they have someone to talk to.

3. Main Areas of Responsibility

- 3.1. Under the direction of and in consultation with the Director of Boarding, the Independent Listener will be required to note the following:
 - a. Take into account the Schools views on the student's needs, as well as the students wishes and views;
 - b. If contacted by a student, they should provide an opportunity for them to talk through problems and issues in a safe and non-discriminatory manner;
 - c. Encourage the students to participate in decisions affecting them;
 - d. Keep accurate and confidential records bearing in mind some students wish to remain anonymous;
 - e. Safeguarding and child protection issues arising from conversations with students should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) either directly or via the Director of Boarding who is a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL);
 - f. Provide feedback to the Director of Boarding for reports, reviews and other meetings;
 - g. Work in a child centered manner, being clear about confidentiality and where boundaries lie.

4. Safeguarding Responsibilities:

- 4.1. To know the identity of the Schools Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy.
- 4.2. Proactively be alert to indicators of potential safeguarding issues and report these immediately in accordance with the Schools procedure.
- 4.3. Be aware of the Schools Safeguarding Policy and to follow its requirements.
- 4.4. Attend training relating to Safeguarding of Children provided by the School if required.
- 4.5. Engage in safe practice and professional conduct to safeguard children to mitigate against the potential for misunderstandings or situations being misconstrued.

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- 4.6. The School is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and expects the same from its volunteers, employees and representatives.

5. Supervision

- 5.1. Supervision arrangements should be discussed with the Director of Boarding to ascertain whether the Independent Listener is able to arrange peer supervision outside TASIS. Nevertheless, the Independent Listener will receive ongoing '*on the job*' support and guidance from the Director of Boarding on an ad hoc basis during their time as an Independent Listener as and when required.

6. Job Context

- 6.1. The Independent Listener must be child focused however sympathetic they may be to other points of view. The function is to compliment the work and activities of the boarding staff and parents.
- 6.2. In bringing this autonomous perspective, the Independent Listener must behave in an anti-discriminatory manner. The Independent Listener is not expected to accept unquestioningly what those responsible for the child tell them is in the child's interests, but should remain open-minded and foster a healthy scepticism.

7. Knowledge Experience and Training

- 7.1. The Independent Listener should have qualities, skills, experience and/or qualifications in other settings that enable them to undertake work in a professional capacity with children. These may include:
- a. An understanding and empathy of the needs of school age children and adolescents;
 - b. An understanding and appreciation of the difficulties caused by living away from home;
 - c. The ability to work flexibly with a variety of adults and children;
 - d. An understanding of Good Care Practice and Principles;
 - e. An appreciation of the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the National Minimum Standards and other relevant legislation;
 - f. Qualifications/experience in counselling or other relevant disciplines.

8. Problems and Decisions

- 8.1. The Independent Listener will consult and work with the Director of Boarding (and the DSL where required), boarding staff and the students. They will work within all school policies and procedures. All grievances or disputes should follow the procedure and guidance within the Schools Policy.

9. Duration

- 9.1. The initial arrangement would be for a period of 12 months, after 12 months the arrangement will be reviewed by the Head of School, Director of Boarding and the DSL. However, if for any reason an Independent Listener is unable to continue with the role they should contact the Director of Boarding as soon as is reasonable practicable.

10. Notes on Independent Listeners

- 10.1. The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS) requires the School to identify at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school.
- 10.2. The role is voluntary although reasonable expenses for travel may be agreed in advance.
- 10.3. The following procedure is to be followed in any appointments:

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- a. Appointment procedures will be required to follow the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* standard 14 on Safer Recruitment standards;
- b. The position is subject to the usual DBS, child protection, welfare and ‘whistle-blowing’ requirements;
- c. Offer an appropriate role description (this document) and briefing/induction;
- d. Be clear that the position is independent of the main lines of school management, but still subject to the Schools specification and organisation;
- e. Ensure Independent Listener knowledge of ‘school norms and expectations’
- f. There should be an awareness of perception of Independent Listeners other roles (eg police officer, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary);
- g. There must be clear rules on confidentiality – and duty to breach if the event of disclosure or if informed of safeguarding risks to students or other students, there must be no absolute guarantee of secrecy;