



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

Independent Person 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 faculty and staff to ensure that they are following the current version.

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Agreed by:

Head of School	Chair of the Board
Bryan Nixon	David King
25 September 2023	25 September 2023

TASIS is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all students fulfil their potential.

1. Description

- 1.1. **Role Description:** As described within the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS) s11.4. 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. (Ref: NMS 11.4).
- 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 Persons are displayed around the school and within all boarding houses and dormitories.
- 2.2. The Independent Person system is confidential and Independent Persons are under no obligation to inform the school of any calls. Independent Persons 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 Person is expected to follow all policies and procedures driven by the *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, (DfE, September 2023 – all parts), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, (DfE, July 2018) and the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* (DfE 2022).
- 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 Person 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 school's 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 school's 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.
- 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 Person is able to arrange peer supervision outside TASIS. Nevertheless, the Independent Person 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 Person as and when required.

6. Job Context

- 6.1. The Independent Person 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 Person must behave in an anti-discriminatory manner. The Independent Person 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 skepticism.

7. Knowledge Experience and Training

- 7.1. The Independent Person 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 counseling or other relevant disciplines.

8. Problems and Decisions

- 8.1. The Independent Person 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 Person is unable to continue with the role they should contact the Director of Boarding as soon as is reasonably practicable.

10. Notes on Independent Persons

- 10.1. As stated in section 1 above, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 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:
- a. Appointment procedures will be required to follow the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* standard 19 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 Person knowledge of 'school norms and expectations'
 - f. There should be an awareness of perception of Independent Persons other roles (eg police officer, governor, doctor, vicar, local counselor, 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;