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INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY (KS/P&B/073)

Committee Responsible:	Boarding Committee
Lead Officer:	Head of Boarding / Head of Lairthwaite Boarding House
Date of Review:	February 2024
Date to be Reviewed:	February 2027
Signed:	
Date:	

INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY

REVIEW SHEET

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date.

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
1	Original	December 2014
2	Policy review	February 2015
3	Policy review	June 2017
4	Policy review	January 2021
5	Policy review	February 2024

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Version:	05	Owner:	Head of Boarding/Head of Lairthwaite Boarding House
Date:	February 2024	Status:	

INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY

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INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (KSMAT/STAT/040).

1.0 PRINCIPLE

- 1.1 Standard 2.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding (NMS) requires schools to appoint an independent listener, as a possible 'safety valve' for students with concerns or problems.
- 1.2 It is a fundamental value of Keswick school that we help our students to remain safe and healthy, enabling them to continue to access their education without stigma or exclusion. Hence all staff are committed to ensuring our students are safe and feel they have someone to talk to.

2.0 AIMS

- 2.1 To ensure that every student is happy and has someone to talk to when/if the need arises.
- 2.2 To enable pupils to obtain support and guidance when they feel unable to speak with a member of staff.
- 2.3 Keswick School has a system whereby any child who wishes to talk to an independent adult can do so.
- 2.4 The independent listener will be briefed on specific situations which could arise e.g. bullying, drugs etc. and will have access to a copy of the school policies on these issues.
- 2.5 The independent listener will be aware of the other roles which are held and where the child may be directed e.g. designated person for child protection.
- 2.6 Depending on the availability of the independent listeners, they call in regularly to the boarding house and they also provide their contact details so that a child can contact them.
- 2.7 Their role is to listen to and assist a child with any problem they meet. It is not to put the school point of view but rather to assist the child from theirs. Thus, from time to time, they may find themselves at odds with the school policies and it is up to them to enlist any internal support that may be necessary to carry out their duty.
- 2.8 Whilst remaining independent, it should be appreciated that the reputation of the school is at stake and all information gained about the school or the home families must remain confidential within the school. Information should only be given to the school when it needs to know and only with the child's permission.
- 2.9 It is hoped that the independent listeners can work alongside the Head and Deputy Head of Boarding and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) enlisting support where necessary and discussing cases.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and the child must know before going into any great detail that matters concerning child safety will have to be passed on to the correct authorities.

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2.10 Their action may be as follows:

- To help the child resolve the problem.
- To pass on the concern to the relevant staff with the child's permission.
- To talk to relevant staff about a problem that is arising without giving any names.
- To get a group of children together to resolve a problem.
- To persuade the child to go and talk to their form tutor, member of staff in the house or designated senior person.
- To report to the Children's Services themselves, any concern which is relevant to the child protection and safeguarding procedure.

2.11 Independent listeners are chosen because of their sensitive and understanding nature. The independent listeners should enhance the relationship of both pupils and staff and we should have confidence in their integrity to take the best course of action in a crisis.

3.0 NOTES ON INDEPENDENT LISTENERS

3.1 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.

3.2 The following procedure is to be followed in any appointments:

- Appointment procedures to follow the NMS staff recruitment standards.
- The position is subject to the usual child protection, welfare and 'whistle-blowing' requirements.
- Make it clear that 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, organisation and safeguarding procedures.
- There must be clear rules on confidentiality – and duty to breach if informed of safeguarding risk to pupil or other pupils. There must be no absolute guarantees of secrecy.
- 'School norms and expectations.'
- There needs to be an awareness of perception of independent listener's other roles (e.g. policewoman, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary)
- A briefing / induction is carried out by the school's Deputy Head (Pastoral) who is also the designated person for child protection.
- Clarify relationship with their own other professional expectations and codes – religious, medical.
- Ensure that, following appointment, the pupils' awareness is raised – person, role, rules, access.

4.0 MONITORING

4.1 The Head of House and Deputy Head (Pastoral) will monitor frequency and availability of the Independent Listener. Additional support will be identified should the provision not be adequate.

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