



# **S20 INDEPENDENT PERSON POLICY**

**Reviewed: Education and Policy Committee**

**Approved: Full Governing Body**

**Approved Date: December 2024**

**Next Review Date: December 2025**

## **INTRODUCTION**

All members of staff at Westminster Abbey Choir School are committed to ensuring that pupils are safe and feel they have someone with whom they can talk. The Independent Person is an additional point of contact.

The role of the Independent Person is to provide a source of impartial counsel and advice for pupils in the School (all pupils at Westminster Abbey Choir School are boarders). This is a confidential system and the Independent Person is under no obligation to inform the School of any contact with pupils, but will pass on welfare or safeguarding concerns to the School where appropriate.

## **APPOINTMENT**

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding require the School to identify at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff of the School and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the School, to whom boarders may turn about personal problems or concerns that they are facing.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

In order for pupils to feel able to contact the Independent Person, the Independent Person needs to be a recognisable figure and feel comfortable talking with them. To that end, the Independent Person will be invited to present at whole-School assemblies and congregations on a regular basis, as well as to visit boarding houses at the School.

## **SUPPORT FOR PUPILS**

The contact details for the Independent Person, together with those for agencies such as ChildLine and other support groups, will be displayed around the School on noticeboards and in phone booths. Additionally, the contact numbers will also include the Office of the Children's Commissioner (freephone number 0800 528 0731) and email address (<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand>). Reminders of the role and contact details of the Independent Person will be issued to pupils by the Headteacher on an occasional basis and at least termly.

## **LINKS WITH THE SCHOOL**

Within the School, the primary point of contact for the Independent Person is the Deputy Head. An additional link is the Headteacher.

It is important that the Independent Person has a good sense of the way that the School operates and its customs and practices, the better to be able to contextualise and understand any observations made by pupils.

## **APPROACH TO WORKING**

If contacted by a pupil, the Independent Person will provide an opportunity for the pupil to talk through any concerns or issues in a safe and non-discriminatory manner.

The Independent Person will take into account a pupil's perspective and will also present a balanced and reasonable response to the pupil's observations. The Independent Person is not expected to accept unquestioningly what they are told by either the pupil or those responsible for the pupil.

The Independent Person will encourage the pupil to participate in any decisions affecting them. Any grievances or disputes should ultimately follow the Complaints Policy.

Accurate and confidential records of any meetings will be taken. It must be remembered that any safeguarding or child protection issues arising from conversations with pupils must be

reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Local Authority or the Police, as appropriate.

### **SHARING INFORMATION**

Bearing in mind confidentiality, the Independent Person will, where appropriate, share information directly with the Deputy Head who is also the DSL.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate and other external agencies may contact the Independent Person to ask about the working relationship that exists between the School and the Independent Person, as well as to discuss specific issues that have been brought to their attention or any patterns of concern that might be able to be discerned.

### **OTHER ADVOCATES**

It is expected that all pupils within the School will be able to identify a member of staff in whom they feel confident to share any concerns.

Beyond the School environment and the Independent Person, pupils are able to engage with a wide range of people, such as governors, external agencies, GPs and members of the Abbey clergy. If advice is needed, pupils are able to contact the Deputy Head and Headteacher for advice.

### **Independent Person (formerly Independent Listener) Job Description**

The school has a system whereby any child who wishes to talk to an independent adult can do so.

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS 2.3) requires the school to identify at least one person other than a parent, outside of 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. Boarders are informed who this person is, and how to contact them and they are easily accessible. Boarders are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside telephone numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner to contact in case of problems or distress.

The Independent Person:

- Position is unpaid and voluntary and is independent of the main lines of school management.
- Will have a working knowledge of the school and is, through interest, experience and expertise, able to liaise with the students and the management of the school.
- Should have an interest and knowledge of the needs of junior boarders and the issues they face being far distant from home during term time.
- Will be introduced to the students at the start of each academic year, via assemblies and visit at least each term.
- Will provide a phone number that will be displayed on noticeboards around school and within the dormitories.
- Will be available by phone throughout the dates and daily time frames of the academic terms and other times where boarders are present e.g Christmas and Easter week.
- Will attend safeguarding training at least annually in line with the school's safeguarding policy and the direction of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.