



Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility - 'it could happen here'.

Independent Listener Policy & Role Description

September 2020

Date of Policy	1 st September 2020
Review Date	July 2021
SLT Link	Director of Boarding
Governing Body Link	Boarding Governor Danyel Palmer

Signature
Headteacher

Date: Sept 2020

Signature
Safeguarding Governor

Date: 10 September 2020

1. School Vision and Ethos

Our Christian values are at the heart of the ethos of the school and through these we grow individually and as a community. The Story of the Good Samaritan underpins our 7 core values of:

- Honesty
- Forgiveness
- Empathy
- Courage
- Resilience
- Kindness
- Respect.

As a school we have a determination “*to be exceptional in all that we do*” and have an unrelenting commitment to provide:

- Exceptional learning experiences within an environment where students can thrive and learn.
- A caring community that provides students with first class advice, support and guidance, where Children are valued for their individuality and their potential is nurtured and developed.
- A wide range of opportunities that help develop exceptional children with the skills, confidence and knowledge to make a positive contribution to the local and global community both now and in their future lives.
- Staff with an exceptional place to work, develop and inspire children.

2. Our commitment

To safeguard and promote the welfare of children through:

- The provision of a safe environment in which children can learn.
- The provision of high-quality residential provision which nurtures and develops our children to achieve and thrive.
- Identifying concerns early and provide appropriate help and support for children and their parents/carers to prevent concerns escalating to a point whereby intervention would be required under the Children Act 1989 and in accordance with the Somerset Effective Support for Children and Families, Thresholds for Assessment and Services guidance.

3. Introduction

At Sexey’s School we are committed to providing an environment that nurtures and transforms the lives of children attending Sexey’s School and take seriously our responsibilities to safeguard and promote their welfare. In addition, we undertake our responsibilities to work in partnership with agencies as part of the wider, multi-agency, safeguarding system, always acting in the best interest of the child or young person where concerns are identified, in accordance with Sexey’s School Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, statutory guidance and Somerset Safeguarding Partnership policies and procedures.

4. Aims

The school aims to ensure that:

- Appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare
- All staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities with respect to safeguarding
- Staff are properly training in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues

5. Description

5.1. Role Description: As described within the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2.3. 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).

5.2. Reports to: Director of Boarding

6. Introduction

6.1. Sexey's School 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.

6.2. 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.

6.3. The role of Independent Listener is expected to follow all policies and procedures driven by the Keeping Children Safe in Education, (DfE, 2020 – all parts), Working Together to Safeguard Children, (DfE, 2018) and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (DfE 2015).

6.4. 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 Sexey's School are committed to ensuring our students are safe and feel they have someone to talk to.

7. Main Areas of Responsibility

7.1. Under the direction of and in consultation with the Head 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
- 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.

8. Safeguarding Responsibilities

- 8.1. To know the identity of the Schools Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy.
- 8.2. Proactively be alert to indicators of potential safeguarding issues and report these immediately in accordance with the Schools procedure.
- 8.3. Be aware of the Schools Safeguarding Policy and to follow its requirements.
- 8.4. Attend training relating to safeguarding of children provided by the School if required.
- 8.5. Engage in safe practice and professional conduct to safeguard children to mitigate against the potential for misunderstandings or situations being misconstrued.
- 8.6. The School is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and expects the same from its volunteers, employees and representatives.

9. Supervision

- 9.1. Clinical Supervision will be provided through the Schools Consultant Social Worker termly.
- 9.2 Support from Director of Boarding - 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.
- 9.3 The Independent Listener will have a termly line management meeting with the Director of Boarding.

10. Job Context

- 10.1. 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.

10.2. 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.

11. Knowledge Experience and Training

11.1. 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.

12. Problems and Decisions

12.1. 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.

13. Duration

13.1. 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.

14. Notes on Independent Listeners

14.1. 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.

14.2. The role is voluntary although reasonable expenses for travel may be agreed in advance.

14.3. 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 14 on Safer Recruitment standards;
- b. The position is subject to the usual DBS, child protection, welfare and 'whistleblowing' 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 (e.g. 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 pupils, there must be no absolute guarantee of secrecy;

15. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the Director of Boarding.

16. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Behaviour
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Health and safety
- Online safety
- Equality
- Sex and relationship education
- Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Privacy notices
- Whistle-blowing
- Anti-bullying
- IT acceptable use