St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Independent Listener Policy

This policy is the responsibility of: Head of Boarding & Deputy Head - Pastoral

Last review: September 26

Next review: September 27

Introduction

St Mary's School, Cambridge (the School) provides equality of opportunity through a caring environment in which each individual, with support, mutual respect and encouragement of members of staff and of other pupils, is valued and is allowed to develop her own personality and talents while learning to live as part of a community.

We aim to ensure that this community is one in which there is no place for harassment, discrimination, or bullying.

Each boarder has a number of different adults to whom she may turn for advice and support including the Boarding staff at Mary Ward House, the nurses and/or counsellors, the Chaplain or a trusted teacher. Further, all boarders are made aware that the two school counsellors are available to see in confidence and are in School three days per week. The Medical Centre staff are available 8am-4pm Monday to Friday during term-time and a school doctor is available every Tuesday morning before school at Mary Ward House. Boarders may make confidential appointments with a school doctor at the local practice (Woodlands Medical Centre). We place great emphasis on Pastoral care and the systems in place to support the welfare of the pupils are robust.

We also recognise that there may be occasions when a boarder wishes to speak with someone who is not part of the School. Further, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (September 2022) states that a school must: "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".

The School has a volunteer Independent Listener who acts in this capacity.

Independent Listener: Mrs Cliona Devereux

Telephone: 07429795421

Cliona Devereux will act as a supportive adult and active listener who may, in appropriate circumstances, suggest to a boarder the next steps she may wish to consider.

These contact details are displayed on the Mary Ward House noticeboard alongside those of the Children's Commissioner, Childline and Independent School Inspectorate (ISI). They are also stated in the Boarders' Handbook and Welcome booklet.

Role of the Independent Listener

The Independent Listener will act as a confidential and supportive adult to boarders who wish to discuss concerns or worries. In a similar way to any member of staff, including the School Counsellor, confidentiality cannot be maintained in a case where there is concern for the welfare or safety of the boarder (or others) as a consequence of any discussion with the Independent Listener. In these situations, the Independent Listener should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or, in specific situations as detailed in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, other outside agencies which may include the LADO team or the Police. Other than where there is concern for the welfare or safety of the boarder (or others), there is no requirement for the Independent Listener to report to the School any of the conversations they have with boarder.

However:

- The Independent Listener, with explicit agreement from/at the request of a boarder, may contact the School to share specific details or raise particular concerns.
- At their discretion, the Independent Listener can report to the Deputy Head Pastoral generic information such as the number of calls they receive.
- The Independent Listener will visit the School to introduce herself to the boarders early in the academic year and, when newly appointed, to familiarise herself with the School on an informal basis.
- There will be no expectation that the Independent Listener make herself available in person for face-face meetings with the boarders.

Appointment of the Independent Listener

The following procedure is to be followed in appointing the Independent Listener:

- The School will follow the normal recruitment policy in line with current legislation, National Minimum Standards for Boarding, ISI regulations and KCSIE guidance, including appropriate checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- The Independent Listener will be included in the Single Central Register.
- The Independent Listener will be subject to the School's policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, and Whistleblowing.
- This document will be provided to the Independent Listener as a job description.
- The Independent Listener will be provided with an induction which will include safeguarding and child protection training as well as a discussion of the ethos, aims and pastoral care of the School.
- The School will make it clear that the position, which is an unpaid and voluntary role, is to support the boarding pupils, in particular, and lies outside the School management structure.
- The School will be aware of the Independent Listener's other roles and experience (e.g. police officer, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary).
- The School will be aware of the Independent Listener's own other professional expectations and codes (e.g. religious, medical, counselling).
- The School will make clear to the Independent Listener the rules on confidentiality – especially their duty to breach confidentiality if informed of a safeguarding risk to a boarder or boarders.

- The School will ensure that, alongside their understanding of the supportive pastoral structures in place within the School, pupils are aware of the role of Independent Listener including the rules on confidentiality.