

BRYMORE ACADEMY

INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY

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| Created by: Mr Rob Watts | |
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| Approved by Local Advisory Board: | |
| Review date: January 2026 | |
| Signature of Chair of Governors | Signature of Headteacher  A computer screen with a signature  Description automatically generated |

# INDEPENDENT LISTENER POLICY

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This policy should be used in conjunction with the Child Protection Policy. Standard 2.3 of the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS), April 2015* requires schools to appoint an Independent Listener who is outside the staff or the leadership structures to be available to students who may want to discuss concerns or problems. This is over and above the provision already available to them through the implementation of the following policies:

* BCT safeguarding and Child protection Policy
* Anti-bullying policy
* Student Complaints Policy + Procedure

The Independent Listener is expected to follow all policies and procedures driven by the *Keeping Children Safe in Education, May 2022* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children.* It is a fundamental value of the Academy that we help our students to remain healthy, enabling them to continue to access their education without stigma or exclusion. Hence all staff at Brymore Academy are committed to ensuring our students are safe and feel they have someone to talk to.

Mr Rod Cockram, Head of Care at Sky Academy, Taunton has kindly agreed to be the Independent Listener for Brymore Academy. He began this role in the Summer Term 2017.

# 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 Brymore Academy 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 Brymore Academy 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 that 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 Assistant 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.

# 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 (eg policewoman, governor, doctor, vicar, counsellor, local dignitary)

# • 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 Boarding will monitor the frequency and availability of the Independent Listener. Additional support will be identified should the provision not be adequate

# Promotion of the Independent Listener

## Students

The Academy will advertise widely within the Academy the availability of the Independent Listener. This should include (not exhaustive) posters in Academy and the residences, information within the welcome and induction packs, verbal reinforcement by support staff etc.

The information supplied to students must include a simple narrative of the purpose of the Independent Listener, their contact details and a photograph.

Independent Listener Contact Details

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