

INDEPENDENT PERSON POLICY



Our Mission Statement – the reason our College exists

“Living & Growing in the Light of the Gospel”

With Christ at the centre of our learning, we:

- *Help young people to achieve their greatest potential*
- *Guide their intellectual growth, nurture their God-given talents, and inspire them to live in service to others*
- *Aim to develop honest, confident, responsible and compassionate members of society, based on the educational values of Blessed Antonio Rosmini*

Our Vision Statement – the long-term change resulting from our work

‘Begin here, Go Anywhere’

Ratcliffe’s unique educational offering based on our College motto, “Legis Plenitudo Charitas”, Love is the fulfilment of the Law, provides a perfect context within which young people may acquire the emotional knowledge and interpersonal skills necessary to live happy and purposeful lives. The College’s inclusive Catholic ethos is complemented by the outstanding quality of our College community through which our Mission, “Learning and Growing in the Light of the Gospel”, serves to nurture resilience and develop maturity. Young people leave Ratcliffe with a strong sense of who they are and their purpose in the world, equipped socially, emotionally, morally and spiritually to go forth and make a difference to the communities in which they live and work.

INDEPENDENT PERSON POLICY

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This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Rationale

In compliance with the requirements of The National Minimum Standards for Boarding (DfE September 2022) and to help fulfil its wider responsibilities for safeguarding, Standard 2.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding (NMS) requires schools to appoint an Independent Person, as an additional point of contact for students with concerns or problems.

Independent Person

- Mrs Margaret Williams - 07432 566480

As part of the College's duty of care and safeguarding agenda, it is crucial that all students, including boarders feel safe, and know how to share concerns with an appropriate adult should they need to do so. Hence all staff are committed to ensuring our students are safe and feel they have someone to talk to.

The Independent Person is a volunteer who liaises as appropriate with the Deputy Head Pastoral, Assistant Head Boarding, Director of Safeguarding and Student Wellbeing Coordinator. The purpose of the post is for an appropriately trained adult, independent of the College staff, to be available to offer support to students via telephone or text. Contact may be made by students at any time and the Independent Person is responsible for making suitable arrangements. The Independent Person's photograph and contact details is widely displayed around College and College accommodation. A College mobile number is available for students to contact the Independent Person. This mobile number is not used for any other purpose.

The Independent Person is introduced to all new boarders during their induction and is included in handbooks and the Student Planner. Boarding staff remind students regularly of this support. In addition, the Independent Person's details are clearly displayed in common areas, including on noticeboards.

While the role is primarily for boarders in line with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding, all students in the Senior School may access the Independent Person if they wish to raise a concern outside the usual channels.

The role of Independent Person is a volunteer post and as such there is no financial remuneration. The College will reimburse all reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of the role. Ratcliffe College is committed to the safeguarding of its students and staff. All members of staff, including the Independent Person are made aware of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, KCSIE 2023, part 1 and receive regular training on all aspects of

safeguarding. Staff understand that they must report any concerns about a child immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Concerns raised about a member of staff must be reported to the Headmaster. Concerns regarding the Headmaster must be reported to the Chair of Governors.

AIMS:

- To work alongside Boarding staff and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) enlisting support of other relevant staff, where appropriate.
- To ensure that every student is happy and has someone to talk to if the need arises.
- To enable students to obtain support and guidance when they feel unable to speak with a member of teaching staff, their parents or family.
- To receive training about specific scenarios which may arise in the role, e.g., bullying, friendship issues, anxiety about academic work or peer-on-peer abuse and will have access to the relevant school policies on these matters.
- To be aware of other roles which within the Pastoral system, where a child may be directed to for support, e.g., Designated Safeguarding Lead, Peer Listeners, Tutor, Head of Year and the School Counsellor.
- To develop their profile with students so that they will feel able to make contact when they need. The Independent Person will visit the College boarding accommodation in the evening at least once each term.
- To 'listen' and assist a student with any problem they raise. The aim of the role is not to push the School's point of view, but rather listen to the student and to try and understand their feelings on a matter. Where appropriate the Independent Person may 'signpost' people who can provide additional support. From time to time, the Independent Person may need to contact the College to request additional support for a student in order to help them to carry out their duties effectively.
- To always consider the best course of action for the student they are supporting. The Independent Person maintains appropriate confidentiality. However, they are trained to recognise when a disclosure triggers a safeguarding concern and are required to inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This includes any risk of harm to the student, another student, or any adult. Where disclosure is necessary, students are encouraged to be involved in the process.

Confidentiality must never be guaranteed when speaking to a student, and the individual must know and understand before going into any detail that information considered to be a safeguarding matter, will be passed on to the School or external authorities in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

- The Independent Person's role is:
 - To listen to a student supportively and sensitively, without prejudice or judgement and, where appropriate, help them to resolve their concerns/issue.
 - To pass on concerns to the relevant staff with the student's permission, where appropriate, but always pass on safeguarding concerns to the DSL.
 - To persuade the child to go and talk to their form tutor, member of staff in the house or designated safeguarding lead.
 - To report to the Children's Services, any concern which is relevant to the child protection and safeguarding procedure.
- Independent Persons are chosen because of their sensitive and understanding nature. The Independent Persons should enhance the relationship of both students and staff,

and the College should always have confidence in their integrity to take the best course of action.

- The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Standards (NMS) requires schools to appoint an Independent Person, as a possible 'safety valve' for students with concerns or problems.
- **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 student or other students. There must be no absolute guarantees of secrecy.
 - 'School norms and expectations.'
 - There needs to be an awareness of perception of independent Person'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 or the Director of Safeguarding.
 - Clarify relationship with their own other professional expectations and codes – religious, medical.
 - Ensure that, following appointment, the students' awareness is raised – person, role, rules, access.

MONITORING

- The Assistant Head Boarding will monitor frequency and availability of the Independent Person. Additional support will be identified should the provision not be adequate.
- The Independent Person will record, on CPOMS, all conversations with students, and where necessary, pass on concerns to the Deputy Head Pastoral or Director of Safeguarding.
- The Independent Person will meet with the Deputy Head Pastoral or the Assistant Head Boarding and the Senior Housemaster and Senior Housemistress regularly to discuss the role and the support being offered to our students. This meeting will also provide the Independent Person updated safeguarding training, where appropriate, provided by the Director of Safeguarding (DSL).
- Where required, CPD will be provided for the Independent Person by Ratcliffe College.
- Students who feel their concerns have not been resolved after speaking with the Independent Person can escalate their concerns through the numerous other channels for pastoral support available to them at Ratcliffe College. This includes the anonymous reporting app, Whisper, as well as the student complaints procedure. This ensures a route for unresolved concerns.

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Role of the Independent Person

Reporting to: Deputy Head Pastoral

This position is unpaid and you will not be employed by the College, rather serving as a volunteer. You will be provided with a mobile phone by the College.

Overview:

Ratcliffe College is seeking an experienced and empathetic individual to join our team as an Independent Person. The Independent Person will play a crucial role in supporting the emotional well-being of our boarding community members, ensuring compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding. This position requires a compassionate and non-judgmental approach to listening, offering a safe space for students and staff to express their concerns or share their experiences. You will be someone whom the children in our care may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the College.

Responsibilities:

1. Listening:

- Provide an impartial listening service for students who may have concerns, worries, or simply need someone to talk to.
- Establish an environment of trust, empathy, and confidentiality, ensuring individuals feel safe in sharing their thoughts and feelings.

2. Support and Signposting:

- Offer emotional support and, when appropriate, guide individuals to relevant student support services within Ratcliffe College or external resources.
- Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of available support services and resources to provide informed signposting. The Deputy Head Pastoral, Assistant Head Boarding, Director of Safeguarding and Student Wellbeing Coordinator will assist you with this.

3. Record Keeping:

- You will receive limited access to the College's safeguarding management system, CPOMS, to allow you to record any concerns that have been shared with you by students, staff or parents.

4. Collaboration:

- Collaborate with the Student Support Services team and the boarding community staff to ensure a coordinated approach to student well-being.

- Attend meetings on a termly basis at Ratcliffe College to meet with the boarding staff, a selection of boarders, the Director of Safeguarding, the Deputy Head Pastoral or the Assistant Head Boarding. You may claim reasonable travel expenses to facilitate attendance at these meetings.

5. Training and Professional Development:

- Participate as required in training sessions provided by Ratcliffe College or, where appropriate, external agencies. You may claim reasonable travel expenses to facilitate attendance at these sessions.

Qualifications and Experience:

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Demonstrated ability to handle sensitive information with discretion.
- Understanding of safeguarding procedures and best practices, or a willingness to learn them.

Personal Attributes:

- Empathetic and non-judgmental approach.
- Ability to build rapport and trust with students and staff.
- Strong attention to detail.
- Reliability. It will be necessary to have your College mobile phone and to check it regularly.