



## Independent School Visitor Policy

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Denise Hart	March 2021		April 2022 (due to new NMS)

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## Purpose of the Independent Visitor

The Independent Visitor's role is to contribute to the welfare of children at Shenstone Lodge and promote children's developmental, social, emotional, educational, religious and cultural needs through unbiased monitoring visits and contact. The independent Visitor may encourage children to exercise their rights and to take part in decisions that may affect them. As far as possible, the Independent Visitor aims to complement the activities of the school and support children's care plan.

The National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Residential Special Schools (April 2015), specifies in **Standard 2** that the school should have an Independent Visitor in place, it stipulates:

**2.2** The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the 'independent person'. Children are informed who this person is, and how to contact them and they are easily accessible. Children are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, to ring in case of problems or distress.

Shenstone Lodge Independent Visitor also undertakes the monitoring visits as set out by **Standard 20** (NMS)

**20.1** The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who is independent of the management of the school, to visit the school six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the head teacher (or school equivalent).

**20.2** Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:

- checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;
- Assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and
- Opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).

## **How children are Informed about the Independent Visitor and how to make contact with them**

Information regarding the Independent Visitor is made available to children on their admission to residence and is an aspect of their welcome pack.

Posters are well distributed around the house containing the contact details and a photograph of the individual so children can clearly understand who they are contacting should they wish. All staff at Shenstone Lodge will support children if needed in making these calls and privacy is given where required.

Shenstone Lodge staffs are to welcome children to use the Independent Visitor service and support them to make contact when and where necessary.

The announced and unannounced monitoring visitors support children becoming familiar with the Independent visitor. During the monitoring visits the independent visitor will engage with children and record all views. If during a visit a child asks to speak with the Independent Visitor privately, staffs are to support this and value its importance.

## **Terms of reference in relation to Independent visitor**

On appointment the terms of reference (Appendix 1) are also discussed and agreed by both school and Independent Visitor.

When the Independent Visitor is appointed, they are given the Head of School, Executive Headteacher, the Governing Body, Ofsted Inspector and Ofsted's contact details. This is to ensure that they can advocate or communication information received/witnessed whilst on a visit or from a phone call received from a child.

## **Appendix 1**

# **Terms of Reference Independent Visitors for Young People Shenstone Lodge School**

## **Introduction**

The National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools require Special Schools with the residential provision to be regularly monitored by a range of stakeholders and in particular an Independent Visitor, (Standard 20). In order to safeguard children's health and well-being, an Independent Visitors for Young People (IV) is in place to monitor the services and care provided within the residential provision at Shenstone Lodge School.

The representative, who is independent of the management of the school, is to visit the school six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school.

## **Purpose**

The Independent Visitor meets with the children and young people to help monitor aspects of their care, such as living conditions and access to educational and recreational opportunities. They monitor to ensure that standards are maintained, policies are adhered to and identify any concerns or issues that the young people may have which can be discussed at governors meetings. The IV will then recommend actions to the Head of Care and Head of School.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Values**

The IV shall ensure the following values are reflected in all aspects of its work:

- The paramount welfare of the child or young person;
- Anti-discriminatory practice;
- The views and wishes of the child or young person are identified and incorporated where possible.

## **Accountability**

- To enable the IV to carry out these duties effectively the residential provision must give right of access to every child or young person and every part of the residential facilities;
- The IV will refer matters as required to the SMT/SLT and governing body;
- HOC/DHOC to make available all records and policies relevant to the provision
- To ensure that visits are coordinated and delivered in accordance to NMS guidance (appendix 1)
- A recognised monitoring template will be used as a framework for each visit.
- The visits will provide the school with an independent audit of its provision and will monitor four key areas; residential leadership and management, residential pupil outcomes, quality of residential children's care, residential pupils safety.

## **Administration**

- The IV will provide a written report of all monitoring visits and this will be produced within a 2 week period of the visit. Reports will be submitted within 2 weeks of each visit and will provide an overview of the provision recognising areas of strength and areas for development.
- Conduct a regular visit of the residential provision within a half termly cycle. Ideally the visits should be unannounced however there may be practical implications of such an arrangement. Visits will, therefore be arranged through the Head of School.
- A written annual report which will include an assessment of the extent to which the IV considers that the residential provision have met the standards and requirements placed on them by Ofsted, and the impact these have on those in its care.