

Category	Residential Care		
Document Name	Independent Visitor & Standard 20 Assurance Protocol		
Approval By	RADIUS Trust		
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Related Policies

Document	Reference
Residential Care Standards Policy	RC.P1

Reference Material

Guidance
Standard 20 of the NMS for Residential Schools (DfE April 2015)

Related Documents

Name	Reference
Assurance Profile - NMS Residential Care Standards	RC.P1.01

Introduction

This document relates specifically to the requirements of Standard 20 of the NMS for Residential Special Schools, published by the DfE in April 2015.

The aim of this document is to provide information in relation to the process and the protocol for recording and acting upon the comments, judgement and outcomes of the regular Independent Visitor review. The requirement of Standard 20 is attached at Appendix A.

The Independent Visitor is a RADIUS Trust Board reserved appointment.

Approach

The Head of Care (or equivalent post) provides the appointed Independent Visitor with access to pupils, records, complaints log (and associated document) and other relevant records, analysis and management records and files.. The Head of Care (or equivalent post) maintains a record file of all visits and engagement with the IV.

The approach adopted is based upon a “tell me, show me” engagement with management of residential care standards compliance.

The Independent Visitor, who is independent of the management of the school is appointed by the Trust Board with the Trust CEO (in the role of Clerk to the Trust) fulfilling a commissioning role for the IV in each school (see role description in Appendix B). The Independent Visitor is briefed and inducted into the role by the school Head of Care (or equivalent post) in each school. Such briefing/induction is evidenced in a dated and authorised record.

Additionally, each review/visit (minimum of six throughout the year) is recorded (see template below



and provide to each IV) and is subject to a check for completeness and compliance by the Lead Governor for Residential Standards/Safeguarding as well as made available during Ofsted inspections.

Protocol for Independent Visitors

The Independent Visitor will arrange unannounced/announced visits and reviews and have the ability to hold by arrangement “listening” sessions with pupils/students and staff. Visits to undertake the role will be fully at the discretion of the Independent Visitor and will include unannounced review of facilities and relevant activities for pupils/students across the residential experience of pupils.

Additionally the Independent Visitor is expected to develop practical arrangements to be available for day pupils/students attending the school. This development and arrangements will allow day pupils/students to access a similar level of independent advocate and voice on their behalf.

Following each visit by the Independent Visitor a report is completed (see template in Appendix C) and will be issued to the following in its finalised form to:

- The Clerk to the Governing Body (CEO)
- The Headteacher/Principal (with courtesy copy to the Head of Care or equivalent)
- The Lead Governor (for residential standards and safeguarding).

It is expected that any matters for action will be acted upon by the Headteacher/Principal via local arrangements for the operation of senior management processes.

The Lead Governor may share the IV report with comment with the full governing body and cross reference matters of interest in normal sharing with the full governing body. Where there are deemed areas of non-compliance identified by the IV both the Headteacher/Principal and the Chair of Governing Body should be alerted with a view to seeking assurance of corrective action being taken.

As set out in the Residential Care Standards Policy (RC.P1) , RADIUS Trust expects the Independent Visitor to take an active interest in the quality of life, hopes and concerns of pupils/students at the school by providing a listening and independent voice for their views and experiences.

The maximum duration of term for an independent visitor is 4 years.

The role of the Independent Visitor will involve having access to information relating to pupils, their family and others, which is of a highly sensitive nature. It is therefore essential that confidentiality is fully respected and it will be a term of appointment that the appointed IV respects personal and confidential information for pupils and staff. To this end the following key elements for the work have been produced and this forms an agreement between the Independent Visitor (IV) and RADIUS.

1. The Head of Care (or equivalent post) will be the IVs primary link with the school. It is his/her responsibility to provide the IV with access to pupils/students, staff and records.
2. The Head of Care (or equivalent post) will provide professional advice on any matters relating to school and Trust policies regarding pupil/student welfare.
3. Any concerns about advice provided or incidents encountered should be raised directly with the Headteacher/Principal. Lack of satisfaction with the referral to the Headteacher/Principal then should be followed up with the Chief Executive of RADIUS Trust. Subsequent lack of satisfaction should be referred directly to the Chair of the RADIUS Trust Board.
4. It is a requirement that information and knowledge about pupils/students and the operation of the school is confidential and should not be divulged to any person outside the school.

Annual Report

To satisfy the requirement for standard 20.4 (see appendix A), the Headteacher/Principal will review and include this information in the school's Annual Report. The Lead Governor should specifically take a view that the Annual Report is compliant with standard 20.4 or otherwise raise non compliance with the Chair of Governing Body or the Clerk (CEO).

Appendix A: Standard 20 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Schools, DfE April 2015.

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 Headteacher/Principal.

20.2 Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced and 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).

20.3 Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the Head of Care (or equivalent post). Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. Monitoring reports should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection.

20.4 The Headteacher/Principal, governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year:

- A review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to:
 - its Statement of Purpose;
 - its staffing policy;
 - the placement plans for individual children;and
- An internal assessment of its compliance with these Standards.

Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.

Appendix B: Role Description for an Independent Visitor (IV)

Activities involved in the IV role

- Providing an accessible service to pupils/students to discuss personal problems and concerns in confidence outside of the existing staff support framework.
- Encouraging and advising pupils/students on how to use the existing support framework, where appropriate.
- Understanding and advising pupils/students on the limits to confidentiality, e.g. where a concern or disclosure may be a safeguarding issue, or where resolution of a problem may need mediation with key staff
- Reporting to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead any indication that a pupil/student or anyone else has been harmed or may come to harm or if a criminal offence has been committed
- Mediating between pupil/student and the school where it appears this could resolve concerns.
- Supporting pupils/students to develop the ability to make decisions, problem-solve and become effective self-advocates
- Review school records to confirm completeness and to ensure timely and appropriate follow up actions are taking place where relevant.
- Review of the day and residential facilities.
- Review actions from previous IV visits and discuss progress made.
- Complete, date and sign a report of the every visit for review and follow up by the school senior management and Governing Body and to be made available at Ofsted inspections (see template in Appendix C):
 1. Transfer of open actions from the previous IV report with commentary on further actions to be taken and responsibilities.
 2. A summary of findings of the facilities.
 3. Review of the school records.
 4. A summary of individual discussions held (safeguarding and child protection concerns or confidential conversations not to be recorded in this report).
 5. General commentary and findings.
 6. Action items to be reviewed and followed up by senior management.

Duration

This is a flexible role, requiring a maximum commitment of 4 academic years consisting of 6 visits within each academic year. The volunteer should be available by email and phone when required.

Skills required

- Experience in working with children and young people, ideally including those with special needs.
- Commitment to safeguarding and its principles.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Sensitivity and empathy towards the individual needs of the student.
- Ability to support students to improve their independence.

Benefits of being an Independent Visitor

- Opportunity to apply experience and skills in a unique environment.
- As a voluntary role it provides an opportunity to contribute to the social capital resource of the community.
- Ongoing support throughout the volunteering time from the Head of Care (or equivalent post)
- Reward and satisfaction in supporting children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities to achieve their true potential.

Appendix C: Independent Visitor Report

The report below will be used to accurately record the findings of all visits.

Name of School			
Date of last review		Date of current review	
Duration of visit		Announced / Unannounced	

Status of action items following previous IV visit (All actions to be transferred from previous IV report)			
Item	Action	Outcome/Evidence	Responsibility
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

School Record Checks

Record	Checked (Record Number Seen)	Summary of Findings	Lead Governors Recommendation
Safeguarding & Child Protection			
Attendance			
Complaints			
Sanctions			
Use of Reasonable Force			
Serious incidents			
Discriminations			
Absconding			
Risk assessments			
Individual care plans			
Fire record			

Building & Equipment (particular attention to residential areas)			
Item	Checked	Summary of Findings	Lead Governors Recommendation
Physical condition of building			
Furniture			
Living space and leisure equipment			

Individual Discussions			
Member	Private	Summary of Findings	Lead Governors Recommendation
Staff			
Pupils			

Action Items**(List all open action items from previous visit and new action items)**

Item	Action	Responsibility
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

Sign Off

Independent Visitor			
Print Name			
Signature		Date	
Additional Comments			

Lead Governor			
Print Name			
Signature		Date	
Additional Comments			