

Safeguarding Children - Policy and Procedure

Opening statement

British Schools in the Middle East (BSME) is the largest dedicated network of British International Schools in the region with over 160 schools and 100 businesses as members of the organisation. BSME runs the largest inter-school student Events programme in the Middle East, as well as an extensive professional learning programme. Additional services like representation with educational and governmental organisations and accreditation are also offered.

Statement of Intent

BSME is represented on and supports the International Task Force on Child Protection Statement of Commitment:

1. All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse.
2. Everyone has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
3. All schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school.
4. All actions on protection are taken with consideration for the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

BSME aims to apply the same or more robust standards of safeguarding and child protection as those required of schools in England in order to create and maintain the safest possible environment for children to:

- attend BSME member schools
- participate in BSME coordinated events and activities, like inter-school competitions, or participating at the Annual Conference

BSME acknowledges that we must work in partnership with our member schools, and the wider governmental and voluntary sectors throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and across the world, in order to help safeguard all children whom BSME works with directly or that we come into contact with through our activities from potential abuse.

Who does it apply to?

This policy applies to all full-time and permanent BSME staff, including Country Representatives and Executive Committee members who work with or come into contact with children through BSME's activities, as well as temporary staff. This also applies to organisations or consultants working with or collaborating with BSME. For clarity, BSME defines a child as any person under the age of 19.

This policy will be shared with all staff on an annual basis. Existing staff will be required to support the policy and any updates required and ensure that they understand how it applies to their roles. It will be made available to member schools, their pupils and their parents via the BSME member dashboards and on the BSME website.

Good practice framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of the following UK law and guidance that seeks to protect children including:

- The Children Act 1989/2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)

- United Nation's Convention of the Rights of the Child (1991)
- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children and their parents/carers (HM Government 2015)
- Data Protection Act (1998) and GDPR (2016)
- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)

Legal framework

BSME recognises that they work with children directly and indirectly throughout the Middle East region and that the legal context of child protection varies between member countries. In addition to our own good practice framework, we will ensure that we operate within the laws and with the appropriate child protection support systems of the countries within which we, or our member schools, work.

BSME recognises that:

- safeguarding children is every adult's responsibility
- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children should be equally protected from all types of abuse and/or harm regardless of (actual or perceived) age, racial heritage, gender or gender identity, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity
- some of the children that BSME works with are additionally vulnerable – perhaps due to their family situation, physical or learning disabilities or lack of wider support networks
- cultural attitudes towards child protection vary from country to country and these do not always reflect UK standards
- in order for safeguarding systems to be effective, BSME will work in partnership with our member schools, partners and other appropriate agencies
- abuse is rarely a stand-alone event and often multiple issues overlap
- in addition to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and neglect, there are a range of other safeguarding concerns that BSME aims to protect children from, including but not limited to:
 - bullying (including online bullying)
 - peer-on-peer abuse
 - self-harm (including harmful behaviours)
 - mental health
 - child sexual exploitation
 - domestic abuse

Definitions of these terms can be found in the Appendix 2.

During BSME coordinated events (such as inter-school competitions), we will seek to keep children safe by requiring attending schools ensure to:

- provide the name of a suitably trained member of staff who is allocated as the leader for the event who has overall responsibility for ensuring the supervision and conduct of the trip and pays due regard to the health, safety and welfare of those involved in the event
- secure appropriate permission from the child's parent/carer to travel to and participate in the event and are fully aware that they are acting in loco parentis

- conduct a full and thorough risk assessment of the event and any travel involved prior to departure and detailed steps that have been/will be taken to manage and minimise risk
- continue to risk assess throughout the event taking into account any changes in staff or students' health, changes in weather, changes in the political situation, etc. which may affect risk
- check the latest foreign travel advice for any country they plan to visit prior to departure and ensure that you keep abreast of any changes in advice (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)
- ensure that adult to child ratios as per the BSME Games Handbook and that any attending adults have the appropriate checks from ACRO, or police clearance from relevant countries
- have gender appropriate staff deployed on all trips as represented by the students
- have at least one accompanying adult with an up-to-date first aid certificate
- have adequate insurance and medical cover
- complete a major incident form if anyone in the party is seriously harmed during the event, and a near-miss form for situations which can provide learning around the safety of future events, to be shared with BSME as soon as is practicably possible (see Appendix 3)
- establish robust emergency procedures
- guarantee separate sleeping arrangements for male and female pupils and that pupils have an appropriate level of privacy for sleeping, changing and bathing.
- take responsibility to inform parents that their children may appear in BSME coverage of the event.

During BSME delivered events, we will seek to keep children safe by:

- valuing them, listening to them and respecting them
- ensuring that all staff working with children are carefully selected, and have had appropriate background checks conducted
- ensuring that all staff who work with children have read and understood this policy, know what to do if they have concerns and understand and accept their responsibility for the safety of children in their care
- ensuring that safeguarding and child protection is included in all new staff induction and that all staff receive regular training
- providing effective management of staff through support, training and quality assurance measures
- recording and storing the personal information of children professionally, securely and in line with BSME's privacy policy
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for children and staff
- responding swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and to ensure confidential information is restricted to the appropriate external agencies and designated staff within BSME
- developing and implementing an anti-bullying environment where adults model supportive language and respectful behaviours
- developing and implementing an effective complaints procedure available on school portals for their information
- ensuring all children and their parents/carers have access to this safeguarding policy by making it available on the BSME website.

Through working with BSME member schools, we will seek to keep children safe by:

- ensuring that all BSME schools have met the minimum safeguarding requirements of the British Schools Overseas (BSO) inspection framework or similar approved frameworks;
- advocating educational standards of safeguarding and child protection as set by the DfE throughout our network of schools by:
 - providing guidance on our website
 - including safeguarding in network meeting agendas
 - including safeguarding in the Annual Conference Programme
 - issuing regular updates to membership regarding developments in the UK which affect safeguarding
 - providing a broad Professional Learning offer focused on safeguarding
 - establishing and developing links with other agencies and organisations which support safeguarding, locally and in the UK
- requiring schools which are not meeting their safeguarding and child protection obligations to undertake a programme of improvement in this area or be removed from the BSME membership
- monitoring any safeguarding or child protection concerns across the membership and using this information to inform developments.

BSME contractors and service providers

BSME will ensure that contractors and providers are aware of these safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. All employees of these organisations should use our procedure to report concerns. When we commission services from other organisations, we will ensure that compliance with our policy and procedures is a contractual requirement.

Use of ICT and social media

BSME staff and volunteers are required to be professional in their use of BSME IT equipment and systems. Any images that are taken and/or published of children must only be done so with the permission of the child's guardians, secured by their schools, and should only be taken and stored using BSME equipment. Any direct communications with children must be done through the BSME official systems, preferably through staff in member schools. Any inappropriate language (e.g. racist, bullying, etc.) shared online by either a child or an adult, related to a BSME event and within the BSME membership or by a member of BSME staff, should be reported directly to the CEO in their role as DSL.

Management of safeguarding

BSME's designated safeguarding lead is: [BSME CEO](#)

BSME's lead safeguarding Executive Committee Member is: [BSME Chair](#)

They can be contacted:

- during working hours: +971 504501389
- outside working hours: ceo@bsme.org.uk

It is the role of the DSL to:

- monitor the effectiveness of policy and procedures
- make referrals to external agencies when appropriate
- ensure that relevant staff are trained
- update staff on new safeguarding developments

Safeguarding compliance is monitored by the DSL and reported via the Lead Safeguarding Executive Committee Member.

If a child discloses abuse:

- stay calm and be reassuring
- find a quiet place to talk and establish the basic facts, taking care not to investigate or ask leading questions
- believe what you are being told
- listen, but do not press for information
- remain open-minded, do not pre-judge
- say that you are glad that the child told you
- say that you will do your best to protect and support the child
- determine if this incident may affect how the child will be able to participate in any activities
- acknowledge that the child may have angry, sad or even guilty feelings about what happened, but stress that the abuse was not the child's fault
- do not make any promises not to pass on the information
- at the earliest opportunity, make written notes
- inform the CEO
- take all necessary steps to protect the child from a continuation of the alleged abuse
- acknowledge that you will probably need help dealing with your own feelings

What to do if you have concerns about the actual or potential abuse of a child attending a BSME member school, a BSME coordinated event or competition or BSME delivered event

All safeguarding and/or child protection concerns relating to a child who attends a BSME member school should be reported directly to the CEO who will report it to the relevant school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Child Protection Officer. It is their responsibility to ensure that appropriate action is taken in line with their school's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. This report should be made in writing with a copy submitted to the DSL at the member school (see Appendix 3).

Do not attempt to discuss your concerns about the child with the child's family or share your concerns with anyone else except the DSLs. Doing so could potentially increase the child's risk of abuse.

The DSL at BSME will follow-up with the DSL of the child's member school directly (unless they are implicated in the concern) to ensure that they are satisfied that appropriate action has been taken.

Due to only being able to share information relating to safeguarding and child protection on a 'need to know' basis and 'in the best interests of the child', the DSLs may not be able to provide you with an update on what action, if any, has been taken. Continue (if able) to monitor the situation and if you feel that there is no improvement or the situation is worsening, ensure that you submit a further report (to both the school and BSME's DSL, highlighting your ongoing concerns).

If there is a concern for the immediate safety of a child, the local police or child protection services should be informed.

What happens next

All safeguarding concerns and reports will be managed by the DSL whose role it is to collate relevant information, establish thresholds of concern, liaise with the DSLs in BSME's member schools, make referrals and cooperate with child protection services and/or the police as appropriate.

All safeguarding concerns and reports will be stored securely in either a locked filing cabinet or in a password protected secure online area. The information will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act (1998) and GDPR. These records should be stored for 10 years.

What to do if you have concerns about potential or actual abuse of a child by a member of BSME staff

Any concerns or information relating to the abuse of any child by a BSME member of staff or volunteer will be taken very seriously. Your concerns or information should be recorded in writing (Appendix 3) and given to the CEO at BSME. The CEO, in the role of DSL, has a duty to support you whilst you report and they investigate your concerns. They also have a duty of care to the person about whom the allegations have been made.

It is the DSL's role to conduct the investigation and involve any external authorities as appropriate. Whilst the allegations are being investigated the staff member or volunteer should not be allowed any unsupervised access to children.

If the allegations prove to be substantiated or there remain significant concerns about the staff member's behaviour, their employment should be terminated and any requests for future references by organisations working with children should outline your concerns. If the adult concerned is from the UK, information regarding the termination of their position should be passed to the Disclosure and Barring Service in the UK and ACRO to minimise the risk of them obtaining alternative employment with access to children.

What to do if you have concerns about another adult from a BSME member school

Any concerns or information relating to the abuse of any child by a member of staff from a BSME member school will be taken very seriously. Your concerns or information should be recorded in writing (Appendix 3) and given to the DSL at BSME. The DSL will liaise with the DSL at the member school (or if the allegation involves the school's DSL, then an appropriate member of their SLT).

It is the role of the DSL at the member school to investigate, involving the appropriate external authorities in line with their own safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. The DSL from BSME will liaise regularly with the member school to establish how the allegations are being investigated, and what, if any, action has been taken.

BSME's approach to safer recruitment

BSME applies strict safer recruitment approaches to the appointment of staff. We will, as a minimum:

- interview all applicants (face-to-face or by online) in keeping with Safer Recruitment practices
- obtain two references (linked to a verifiable email or postal address) confirming the candidates suitability to work with children
- interrogate any gaps in employment on their CV/work history
- obtain, where possible, ACRO/ICPC clearance (for those candidates who have previously been employed in the UK) and/or local police checks.

Code of Behaviour

All BSME staff and volunteers are expected to abide by the Code of Behaviour (Appendix 4). This is not only to safeguard children from adults who are seeking opportunities to abuse, but also to protect staff from misunderstandings and false allegations. Any member of staff whose behaviour is in breach of the code of conduct should be reported to the CEO (DSL), who will ascertain whether the breach was deliberate or poor professional judgement, and decide the most appropriate course of action.

Whistle blowing and complaints

We recognise that we need to support an environment that enables adults as well as children to report their concerns. If there is a safeguarding concern about any BSME member of staff or about the safeguarding and child protection practice within BSME or one of its member schools, you must report it to the CEO (DSL). If your concern involves the CEO then this should be passed to the Safeguarding Lead on the Executive Committee, that is, the BSME Chair. BSME has a duty of care to support anyone who reports concerns as long as these are not found to be malicious or vindictive.

British International Schools Safeguarding Coalition (BISSC)

BSME is proud to be a founder member of the newly established British International Schools Safeguarding Coalition (BISSC). The purpose of BISSC is to establish and promote a unified strategic and coordinated approach to strengthening global safeguarding systems. This comes following a joint commitment and passion to drive forward global safeguarding standards from:

- The Association of British Schools Overseas (AoBSO)
- British Schools in the Middle East (BSME)
- Council of British International Schools (COBIS)
- Federation of British International Schools in Asia (FOBISIA)
- Latin American Heads Conference (LAHC)
- National Association of British Schools in Spain (NABSS)
- The Safeguarding Alliance (TSA)

Together, we have joined forces to address critical issues and work collaboratively to drive change. By engaging with policymakers and elected representatives, BISSC aims to ensure global safeguarding risks, challenges and concerns are given the utmost priority in order to protect those most vulnerable.

BISSC will lobby the UK government to provide greater and more effective safeguarding support and guidance to the British international school sector, including, but not limited to:

- The establishment of the International Teaching Regulation Agency (ITRA)
- The establishment of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme for International Schools (MDSIS)
- The creation of a shared resource hub for British international schools
- The strengthening of safeguarding partnerships between BISSC, the Government and regulators.

Further information on the work of BISSC can be found [here](#).

Date of writing: 01 September 2018
Date of current review: 22 June 2024
Date of next review (1 year on): June 2025
Policy owner: BSME (*drafted with support from Kidscape, UK*)

Appendix 1: Useful contacts

UK Disclosure and Barring Service

customerservices@db.s.gsi.gov.uk

+44151 676 9390

**Please note that DBS no longer provides certificates for teachers working in the international market*

ACRO

customer.services@acro.pnn.police.uk

+44 (0)2380 479 920

Appendix 2: Types of abuse

Abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

Physical abuse: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Specific safeguarding issues

- bullying including cyberbullying
- children missing education
- child missing from home or care
- child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- domestic violence
- drugs
- fabricated or induced illness
- faith abuse
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- forced marriage
- gangs and youth violence
- gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- hate incidents
- mental health
- missing children and adults
- private fostering
- radicalisation
- relationship abuse
- sexting
- trafficking

Behaviours linked to the likes of drug taking, alcohol abuse, truanting and sexting put children in danger. Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via peer on peer abuse. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyberbullying), gender based violence/sexual assaults and sexting.

Adapted from Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021, Department for Education

Appendix 3: Recording Form for Safeguarding Concerns or Casualties

BSME staff are required to complete this form and pass it to the CEO, in their capacity as Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), if they have a safeguarding concern about a child that they come into contact with through BSME activities or a casualty has occurred.

Full name of child	Date of Birth	School Name / Year Group	Your name and role

Nature of concern, disclosure or casualty	
Please include where you were when the child made a disclosure, what you saw, who else was there, what the child said or did and what you said and did.	
Time & date of incident:	
Was there a physical injury? Yes / No	Did you see it occur? Yes / No
If yes, describe the injury:	
Was anyone else with you? Who?	
Has this happened before?	Did you report the previous incident?
Who are you passing this information to?	
Name:	
Position:	
Your signature:	
Time form completed:	
Date:	

Time and date form received by DSL:

Action taken by DSL including who/which organisation referred to:

Date / Time:

Parents informed: Yes/No (If no, state reason)

Feedback given to:

School DSL	Child	Person who recorded disclosure
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Further Action Agreed:

Appendix 4: Code of Behaviour

Do put this code of conduct into practice at all times.

DO treat everyone with dignity and respect.

DO set an example you would wish others to follow.

DO treat all children equally and with respect.

DO plan activities that involve more than one other person being present, or at least are within sight and hearing of others.

DO respect a child's right to personal privacy.

DO allow children to talk about any concerns they may have.

DO encourage others to challenge any attitudes or behaviours they do not like.

DO try to avoid becoming engaged in private one-on-one conversations with a child.

DO make everyone aware of BSME's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

DO remember this code even at sensitive moments, e.g. when responding to bullying, bereavement or abuse.

DO keep other staff informed of where you are and what you are doing.

DO take any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously and refer immediately.

DO NOT abuse the relationship of trust that you have with children.

DO NOT trivialise abuse.

DO NOT engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact.

DO NOT play physical contact games with children.

DO NOT show favouritism.

DO NOT use inappropriate language.

DO NOT let allegations, suspicions, or concerns about abuse go unreported.

DO NOT allow unwarranted criticism of other members of the BSME team to go unchallenged.

DO NOT just rely on your good name to protect you.