



BRITISH  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOLS  
SAFEGUARDING  
COALITION



# Safer Recruitment

Cross Association Code of Conduct  
12th May 2025

# Legal Statement

This Safer Recruitment Code of Conduct is intended to provide a framework of best practice standards for member schools of the British International Schools Safeguarding Coalition (BISSC).

**All member schools are required to ensure that their recruitment policies and practices comply fully with the legislation, regulations, and statutory guidance of their host country.**

Where a conflict arises between this Code of Conduct and national legislation or statutory requirements, the host country's legal obligations must take precedence. This document is not a substitute for legal advice or statutory guidance, and all schools must ensure compliance with local laws and education standards.

By adopting and applying this Code of Conduct, schools acknowledge their responsibility to operate within the legal context of their jurisdiction while striving to meet or exceed the safeguarding standards promoted herein.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the content at the time of drafting, BISSC and its member Associations accept no liability for any inaccuracies, errors, omissions, or subsequent developments that may impact the applicability of the content. BISSC disclaims all liability for any loss, damage, or disruption that may arise from reliance on this document or from its misuse or unauthorised distribution.

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# Overview and Aims

**Safeguarding will only work when we work together, and for this purpose the British International Schools Safeguarding Coalition has been established.**

The British International Schools Safeguarding Coalition (BISSC) is committed to setting the expectation that recruitment practices across its member schools adhere to the highest standards of safeguarding and child protection. This Safer Recruitment Code of Conduct applies to all member schools of the following Associations [AoBSO](#), [BSME](#), [COBIS](#), [FOBISIA](#), [LAHC](#), [NABSS](#) and [TSA](#). The Code of Conduct is designed to establish a standardised, collaborative framework that sets the expectation that all member schools in the stipulated Associations adhere to the highest standards of safer recruitment practices and policies. This framework aims to reduce risk and protect children and young people by preventing unsuitable individuals from working with them in a range of contextually diverse educational settings.

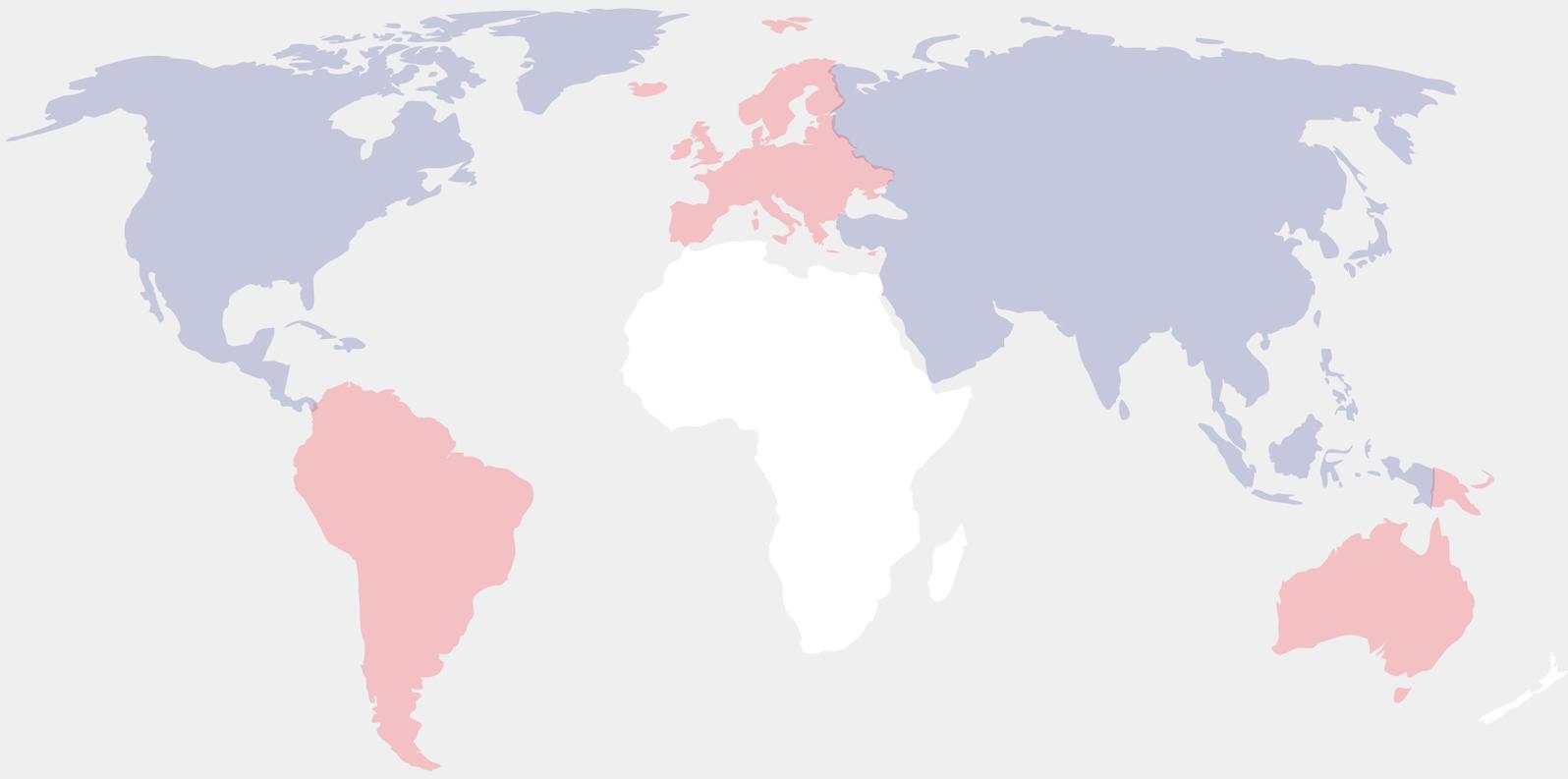
The main objectives of this Code of Conduct are to:

- a. Promote consistency and accountability across all BISSC member Associations and their schools.
- b. Facilitate mutual support and communication between Associations.
- c. Support all member schools to operate to the highest standards of safer recruitment practice.
- d. Establish sanctions for schools that do not comply with the Code of Conduct.
- e. Work towards strengthening safeguarding measures across all British international schools and the wider global education sector.

The Code of Conduct is informed by global best practice established by Associations and international bodies.

Collective expectations for Associations centre around an unfaltering commitment to Safer Recruitment Practices. Specific components include but are not limited to:

- a. An equitable, fair, thorough and transparent safer recruitment process that applies consistently to all appointments across the school workforce, governors and trustees.
- b. Conducting thorough safer recruitment background checks. For example, where relevant: official ICPC checks, Prohibition Order checks, local police checks, verified written and verbal reference checks, other professional qualification checks and ID checks etc. as appropriate.
- c. The implementation of rigorous and robust advertising, application, interview, selection and induction processes to reflect the paramount importance of safeguarding and to reflect recognised best practice.
- d. Setting the expectation that all staff involved in the recruitment of members of the school workforce, governors and trustees are trained to an appropriate level in safer recruitment practices.
- e. Setting the expectation that all members of the school workforce, governors, trustees, and volunteers are trained to an appropriate level to meet and promote high standards of safeguarding and child protection.



# Cross Association Expectations

All schools are required to implement and maintain rigorous recruitment practices that are both equitable and thorough. Key expectations include:

- a. **Safer Recruitment Policy:** Schools should have an established Safer Recruitment Policy, aligned with national and international standards, ensuring all staff undergo thorough background and reference checks. All personnel involved in the recruitment process should have undergone safer recruitment training.
  
- b. **Commitment to Safeguarding:** Each school should clearly communicate its commitment to Safeguarding through job advertisements, application forms, and other recruitment materials. These statements should also be prominently displayed on school websites.

# Evidence of Safer Recruitment Compliance

To ensure safer recruitment compliance, schools should, if requested by an Association, be able to provide documented evidence of safer recruitment practices. This evidence should include:

- a. **Safer Recruitment Policy:** A policy document outlining the school's approach to safer recruitment.
- b. **Safeguarding Statements:** Clear statements displayed in job advertisements, application forms, and reference request forms.
- c. **Application Forms and Advertisement Examples:** Documentation of application forms and recruitment advertisements that promote safeguarding.
- d. **Reference Request Forms:** Forms that include questions about safeguarding practice/concerns, and questions regarding the candidate's suitability to work with children.
- e. **Examples of Interview Questions and Notes:** Interviews should include questions related to safeguarding. Detailed notes should be recorded and stored confidentially and securely.
- f. **Letters of Appointment/Contracts:** Documentation showing that all employment offers are conditional upon satisfactory safeguarding checks.
- g. **Single Central Record (SCR):** Schools should maintain a SCR that includes all staff, temporary staff, volunteers, and governors. This record should be comprehensive and up to date, ensuring that all individuals have been thoroughly vetted and all details have been stored confidentially and securely.
- h. **Staff Files:** Files stored confidentially and securely should contain verification evidence for cross-referencing with the SCR, including proof of checks conducted for temporary staff and volunteers.
- i. **Staff Declaration:** Annual self-declaration of good conduct submitted by all staff.
- j. **Review of Policies and Practices:** Evidence of regular reviews of safer recruitment policies to ensure alignment with safeguarding best practices.
- k. **Staff Training:** Evidence that all staff involved in recruitment at any level are fully aware of the correct policy and practice.

# ITFCP Guidelines

Schools are also strongly recommended to follow the recruitment guidance provided by the International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP), particularly if relying on external recruitment agencies. Key points include:

- a. **Consistent Interview Practices:** A designated interviewer should Chair and manage interview panels for all candidates for the same position. Safeguarding-related questions should be included in at least the first round of interviews. It is recommended that all staff involved in recruitment should complete regular safer recruitment training.
- b. **Comprehensive Reference Checks:** Schools should contact at least three professional references. Each individual reference should be verified by phone and/or video call. At least two references should be from Headteachers within the last six years, including the most recent school. Open-ended or generic references are not acceptable.
- c. **Record-Keeping:** Detailed notes from all interviews should be recorded and stored confidentially and securely in a centralised system

# School Workforce Onboarding Process

To ensure ongoing compliance with safer recruitment practices, all appointments should be conditional upon the following:

- a. **Criminal Record Checks:** Checks should be conducted for all countries where the candidate has lived for six months or more in the past 10 years. This includes verifying cautions or warnings.
- b. **Certification and Diploma Verification:** Schools should verify the candidate's teaching certifications and academic credentials.
- c. **Conditional Offer Letters:** Letters of appointment should include a clause stating that any misrepresentation, falsification of documents and/or failure to pass background checks could result in immediate termination of employment.
- d. **Safeguarding Training:** Before commencing work with students, all new staff should complete induction which includes safeguarding training, with refresher training provided at least once per year.

# Reporting a Safer Recruitment Concern to Associations

Any concern relating to the safer recruitment practice, standards or policies of any Association member school is to be reported to the school's Association(s) through the reporting process, as directed on the Association website:

- a. Such concerns should be reported by completing a standardised online safer recruitment incident report form, accessible via all Association websites.
- b. In addition to all Association member schools, any school, educational setting or organisation can, and are encouraged to, report any safer recruitment concerns and/or breaches
- c. To encourage non-malicious whistleblowing without fear of retribution, anonymised reporting should be an option, where possible.
- d. Upon receipt of form the relevant Association's safeguarding lead should be notified immediately.

# Conducting a Formal Inquiry following a Complaint – Process Across Associations

The process for responding to and investigating complaints and alleged concerns and/or breaches of safer recruitment policy should include, but is not limited to:

- a. Receipt of an incident report is acknowledged by the Association and communicated, if not anonymised, to the person submitting the report.
- b. The school(s) at the centre of the incident report are contacted by the Association in receipt. This Association is designated as the 'Lead' Association and is tasked with leading the investigation into the incident.
- c. The Lead Association contacts other Associations with which the school(s) at the centre of the incident report is/are also affiliated.
- d. The Lead Association conducts a preliminary review of the incident report to assess the credibility and severity of the reported concern and/or breach and considers how best to proceed.
- e. The Lead Association conducts a formal inquiry consisting of designated safeguarding experts from within and potentially outside the Association.
- f. All relevant evidence from relevant documents, communications and stakeholder interviews should be gathered, recorded and saved in compliance with GDPR and best practice connected to confidentiality and the processing of data.
- g. The inquiry team compiles a formal report which includes background, findings, evidence, a conclusion and recommended priorities and actions and makes the report available to all Associations of which the school is a member, along with any other relevant organisations or authorities.

# Potential Membership Sanctions Across Associations

Potential membership sanctions for non-compliance with safer recruitment practices, standards and policies will vary based on the severity of the concern and/or breach. The priority of each Association will be to liaise with the school in question to support them in addressing and rectifying the concern. If no resolution is reached, or in case of repeated concerns, sanctions can be applied. The level of sanction will be agreed across each Association of which the school(s) at the centre of the incident report are members. At all times, guidance and support from Membership Organisations to help the school meet expectations and requirements should be a priority. The levels of response could include, but are not limited to:

- a. **Association membership 'at risk' warning:** Issuance of a formal warning that membership is at risk. Communicate the outcome of the formal inquiry conducted by the Lead Association. Highlight the recommendations and requirements for immediate corrective action and set out the agreed timeframe and follow up review date.
- b. **Membership 'probation':** As above. In addition, the Lead Association places the school on membership 'probation'. This results in enhanced monitoring and support for an agreed period.
- c. **Membership 'suspension':** As above. In addition, whilst corrective measures are implemented and the impact is evaluated, the school(s) is subject to a temporary suspension of all relevant Associations. A reasonable timeframe should be stipulated here regarding corrective measures etc.
- d. **Membership 'withdrawal/termination':** In extreme and severe cases, the school(s) is subject to the withdrawal/termination of its membership from all relevant Associations.

# Cross Association, Safer Recruitment Code of Conduct - Monitoring and Review

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually, to ensure that it remains rigorous, fit for purpose and effective. In response to significant incidents, changes in legislation, or feedback from member schools and experts in the field of safer recruitment, additional reviews will also be undertaken as appropriate.

This Safer Recruitment Code of Conduct sets out clear expectations for all BISSC member Associations to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people in their care.

By implementing this Code of Conduct, Associations can help member schools to reduce risk and maintain the highest standards of safer recruitment practices, whilst also promoting and demonstrating a shared cross Association commitment to safeguarding and child protection.

# Conclusion

This Terms of Reference document establishes the framework for the BISSC, setting out its purpose, structure, and guidelines for operation. Members and participating organisations are encouraged to commit to the principles and objectives outlined herein and work collaboratively to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable individuals within the British International Schools community.

**12th May 2025**

**Signed on behalf of the Founding Members:**

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Association of British Schools Overseas

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British Schools in the Middle East

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Council of British International Schools

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Federation of British International Schools in Asia

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Latin American Head Conference

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National Association of British Schools in Spain

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The Safeguarding Alliance



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