



**British International Remote School (BIRS)
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**

Date of Policy:

Date for Next Review:

Policy Lead (Designated Safeguarding Lead - DSL):

Deputy DSL(s):

1. Introduction and Ethos

- 1.1. British International Remote School (BIRS) is unequivocally committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its students.
- 1.2. We believe that all children and young people have an intrinsic right to be safe from harm and to learn in a secure and supportive online environment.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all members of the BIRS community, including staff (teaching and non-teaching), volunteers, contractors, governors/directors, parents/guardians, and students themselves.
- 1.4. Our safeguarding ethos is built on the principles of:
- 1.5. **Prevention:** Creating a safe online learning environment, promoting digital citizenship, and educating students and staff about potential risks.
- 1.6. **Protection:** Following clear procedures for identifying and reporting concerns about a child's welfare.
- 1.7. **Support:** Providing appropriate support to students who may have been harmed or are at risk of harm, and to staff who manage safeguarding concerns.

- 1.8. **Partnership:** Working collaboratively with parents/guardians, and relevant external agencies to ensure student safety.
- a) BIRS recognizes its responsibilities under UK legislation and guidance, including but not limited to the Children Act 1989 & 2004, “Keeping Children Safe in Education” (KCSIE), and “Working Together to Safeguard Children.”
 - b) While our students may be located internationally, our policies and procedures are guided by these UK standards.
 - c) Pastoral Support: We will ensure students receive regular wellbeing check-ins, especially those learning remotely or identified as vulnerable, to maintain emotional as well as academic care.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by BIRS, including:

- a) Online lessons and tutorials.
- b) All online communication between staff, students, and parents.
- c) Use of BIRS online platforms and resources.
- d) Safer recruitment practices.
- e) Any BIRS-organized virtual events or activities.

3. Key Personnel and Responsibilities

3.1. The Proprietor/Board of Governors/Directors: Holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring BIRS meets its safeguarding duties. They will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

3.2. Head teacher/Principal: Ensures the policy is implemented effectively, that staff are trained, and that the DSL has the resources and support needed.

3.3. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- a)
- b) The DSL is the first point of contact for all safeguarding and child protection concerns.
- c) Responsibilities include managing referrals, liaising with external agencies (e.g., Local Authority Children’s Services in the UK, and considering appropriate pathways for international students), providing advice and support to staff, maintaining accurate records, and ensuring staff receive appropriate training.

3.4. Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (DDSL)

- a)
- b) To support the DSL and act in their absence.

3.5. All Staff (including volunteers and contractors):

All staff are responsible for reading, understanding, and adhering to this policy. Specifically, they:

- a) Have a duty to be alert to signs of abuse and neglect and to report any concerns immediately to the DSL, in line with BIRS reporting procedures.
- b) Must maintain professional boundaries and adhere to the **Staff Code of Conduct** and **Online Safety Policy**.

4. Recognizing Abuse and Neglect

Staff will be trained to recognize the signs and indicators of different forms of abuse and neglect, including:

- a) **Physical Abuse:** Including hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise causing physical harm.
- b) **Emotional Abuse:** Including persistent criticism, threats, humiliation, or lack of love and affection.
- c) **Sexual Abuse:** Including forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, or exposure to inappropriate sexual content or behaviour.
- d) **Neglect:** Including the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs.
- e) **Online-Specific Risks:** Staff will also be trained to recognize risks specific to the online environment, such as:
 - Cyberbullying: Bullying that takes place online or through digital devices.
 - Online Grooming: When someone builds an online relationship with a child for sexual purposes.
 - Sexting & Inappropriate Image/Video Sharing: Creating, sending, or receiving sexually explicit images or videos.
 - Exposure to Inappropriate Content: Including violent, pornographic, extremist, or hateful material.
 - Radicalisation and Extremism: Being encouraged to develop extreme views or ideologies.
 - Online Harassment and Stalking.
 - Data Privacy and Security Breaches.
- f) **Contextual Safeguarding:** BIRS recognises that harm can occur outside of home, including peer-to-peer abuse and domestic risks, and adopts a child-centred, environment-aware approach, particularly crucial in virtual school contexts.

5. Reporting Procedures

- 5.1. **Immediate Danger:** If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of serious harm, staff will contact the emergency services in the child's country of residence (if known and feasible) and immediately inform the DSL.

5.2. Concerns:

- a) Any member of staff or volunteer who has a concern about a child's welfare, or has a disclosure made to them, must immediately report it to the DSL (or DDSL in their absence). This should be done verbally in the first instance if urgent, followed by a written record using BIRS's designated safeguarding reporting form.
- b) Reports must be factual, record the date, time, individuals involved, and the nature of the concern or disclosure. Staff should record what was said, using the child's own words where possible, and not investigate or ask leading questions.
- c) The DSL will assess the information and decide on the appropriate course of action. This may include:
 - Seeking further information.
 - Providing support to the student and family.
 - Making a referral to the relevant Local Authority Children's Services (LACS) in the UK where BIRS is registered.
 - For international students, the DSL will consider appropriate reporting pathways, which may involve contacting relevant child protection agencies in the child's country of residence, international child protection organizations, or seeking advice from UK-based agencies with international reach. This will be handled on a case-by-case basis, prioritizing the child's safety.
 - Liaising with the police if a crime may have been committed.

5.3. **Missed Attendance:** The DSL will follow up promptly on non-attendance in remote sessions; multiple unexplained absences will be escalated as potential safeguarding concerns.

5.4. **Confidentiality:** Information will be shared on a "need-to-know" basis only, in line with data protection principles and the paramount need to safeguard the child. All records will be stored securely.

6. Safer Recruitment and Vetting

BIRS is committed to safer recruitment practices to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children. This includes:

- a) Ensuring advertisements make clear the commitment to safeguarding.
- b) Rigorous application, shortlisting, and interview processes, including safeguarding-focused questions.
- c) Verification of identity and qualifications.
- d) Obtaining appropriate criminal records checks (e.g., DBS checks for UK-based staff, or equivalent international checks where feasible and appropriate for international staff).
- e) Seeking and verifying references.
- f) A probationary period for new staff.

- g) Regular safeguarding training for all staff.
- h) Remote staff must join user orientation and Code of Conduct training before instructing students online.

7. Online Safety and Digital Citizenship

BIRS will promote a culture of online safety through:

- a) **Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs):** Clear AUPs for staff, students, and parents regarding the use of BIRS platforms and online communication.
- b) **Secure Platforms:** Using secure and vetted online learning platforms with appropriate privacy settings.
- c) **Filtering and Monitoring:** Implementing appropriate filtering and monitoring on BIRS-provided systems, where feasible and proportionate.
- d) **Education:** Integrating digital citizenship and online safety education into the curriculum in an age-appropriate manner.
- e) **Guidance for Staff:** Clear guidelines for staff on professional conduct online, including communication with students.
- f) **Remote Education Safeguards:**
 - Staff should conduct live lessons from appropriate, professional environments, avoiding private spaces like bedrooms or bathrooms where possible, and ensuring backgrounds are neutral or blurred.
 - For one-to-one sessions with students, BIRS will implement appropriate safeguards, which may include the presence or visibility of a second vetted adult (e.g., teaching assistant or another staff member) where feasible, or ensuring sessions are recorded with prior consent.
 - All professional communication and sessions must use school-issued accounts only; staff must not use personal emails or personal social media to communicate with students.
 - Staff and students must adhere to an appropriate dress code during video sessions.
 - Video sessions should primarily occur during scheduled school hours.
 - Recording of live lessons for wider student access or staff training requires prior explicit parental consent, must be stored securely, and access strictly limited to authorized personnel for defined purposes.

- Students recording or taking screenshots/videos of live sessions or other students/staff is strictly prohibited unless explicitly authorized by the school for a specific educational purpose; any breach will be addressed through the school's disciplinary and safeguarding protocols.
- g) **Managing Online Incidents:** Clear procedures for responding to online safety incidents such as cyberbullying or inappropriate content sharing.
- h) **Privacy and Data Protection:** Adhering to UK GDPR and relevant data protection legislation regarding student and staff data, as outlined in our **Privacy Policy**.
- i) **Inclusive and Accessible Provision:** BIRS will proactively identify students needing accommodations or SEN (Special Educational Needs) support and strive to ensure remote provisions are accessible (e.g., considering options like captions, transcripts, adapted resources where feasible).
- j) **Privacy & Proctoring (for Online Assessments):** Online assessments will be designed to balance the need for academic integrity with student privacy. BIRS will consider alternatives to highly intrusive proctoring methods where possible, and clearly communicate any proctoring measures to students and parents in advance.

8. Training and Awareness

- 8.1. All staff (including volunteers and contractors who have regular contact with students) will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training at induction and at regular intervals (at least annually).
- 8.2. The DSL and DDSLs will undertake advanced/specialist safeguarding training every two years.
- 8.3. Training will cover: this policy, recognizing signs of abuse/neglect (including online risks), reporting procedures, safer working practices, online safety, and relevant legislation/guidance.
- 8.4. Remote-Specific Training: All staff must receive training in remote teaching etiquette, managing boundaries online, securing online environments, and identifying online-specific red flags and safeguarding concerns.
- 8.5. Prevent Duty in Digital Context: Staff will be trained to identify signs of online radicalisation and extremism and understand their responsibilities under the Prevent Duty, ensuring the curriculum promotes fundamental British values and critical thinking.
- 8.6. Parents will be made aware of this policy and provided with information on how to raise safeguarding concerns.

9. Allegations against Staff or Volunteers

- 9.1. BIRS will follow clear procedures for managing allegations against staff or volunteers, in line with UK guidance (including liaison with the Local Authority Designated Officer - LADO - in the UK where BIRS is registered).
- 9.2. Any allegation must be reported immediately to the Head teacher/Principal (unless the allegation is against them, in which case it should be reported to the Chair of Governors/Proprietor).
- 9.3. The DSL will be informed.
- 9.4. The LADO (or equivalent for staff based outside the UK, if applicable and feasible) will be consulted.
- 9.5. The accused individual may be suspended pending investigation, in line with HR procedures.
- 9.6. Support will be offered to the child and the person making the allegation, as well as to the accused member of staff.
- 9.7. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed if an allegation is substantiated.

10. Working in Partnership with Parents/Guardians

- 10.1. BIRS believes that working in partnership with parents/guardians is essential for safeguarding children. We will:
- 10.2. Make this policy easily accessible to parents (e.g., on the school website).
- 10.3. Provide clear information on how parents can raise safeguarding concerns.
- 10.4. Communicate openly with parents about general safeguarding matters and, where appropriate and safe to do so, about specific concerns regarding their child (unless doing so would place the child at further risk of harm).
- 10.5. Encourage parents to support the school's online safety messages and practices at home.

11. Record Keeping

- 11.1. All safeguarding concerns, disclosures, discussions, decisions, and actions taken will be recorded accurately, factually, and in a timely manner, using the school's designated reporting and recording systems.

- 11.2. Records will be stored securely and confidentially, with access strictly limited to authorized personnel (primarily the DSL/DDSLs, Head teacher, and other relevant senior staff on a need-to-know basis).
- 11.3. Any recordings of lessons made for safeguarding or educational purposes (with appropriate consent) will be stored securely, access-controlled, and retained only for as long as necessary, in line with UK GDPR and BIRS's **Privacy Policy**..
- 11.4. Records will be maintained in accordance with data protection laws and BIRS's **Privacy Policy**, adhering to statutory guidance for safeguarding records.

12. **Whistleblowing**

- 12.1. BIRS has a whistleblowing policy that allows staff and others to raise concerns about unsafe practices, breaches of safeguarding policy, or potential wrongdoing within the school without fear of reprisal.
- 12.2. This policy will be made available to all staff.

13. **Policy Review**

- 13.1. This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be reviewed at least annually by the DSL and senior leadership, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or local/international circumstances relevant to our student body.
- 13.2. The review will consider its effectiveness, and any lessons learned from its implementation.
- 13.3. The reviewed policy will be approved by the Proprietor/Board of Governors/Directors.