



British International Remote School (BIRS)

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Academic Year 2026–2027

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Policy Owner: The Principal

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Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Academic Director (contact@thebirs.co.uk)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): The Principal (contact@thebirs.co.uk)

1. Introduction and Ethos

British International Remote School (BIRS) is unequivocally committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its students. We believe that all children and young people have an intrinsic right to be safe from harm and to learn in a secure, supportive online environment.

This policy applies to all members of the BIRS community, including staff (teaching and non-teaching), volunteers, contractors, proprietors, parents/guardians, and students themselves.

Our Safeguarding Principles:

- **Prevention:** Creating a safe online learning environment, promoting positive digital citizenship, and educating students and staff about potential online risks.
- **Protection:** Following clear, structured procedures for identifying and reporting concerns about a child's welfare.
- **Support:** Providing targeted pastoral support to students who may have been harmed or are at risk of harm, as well as supporting staff who manage safeguarding concerns.
- **Partnership:** Working collaboratively with parents, guardians, and relevant external child protection agencies to ensure student safety.

BIRS recognises its responsibilities under UK legislation and statutory guidance, including the Children Act 1989 & 2004, "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (KCSIE), and "Working Together to Safeguard Children." Although our student body is located internationally, our virtual school policies, procedures, and systems are fundamentally guided by these UK standards.

Pastoral Support: We ensure that students receive regular digital wellbeing check-ins — especially those learning remotely or identified as vulnerable — to maintain consistent emotional and academic care.

2. Scope of the Policy

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

- Live, interactive online lessons and tutorials.
- All digital communications between staff, students, and parents/guardians.
- Use of the BIRS Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and designated school platforms.
- Safer recruitment, vetting, and onboarding practices.
- Any BIRS-organised virtual events, extracurricular clubs, or assemblies.

3. Key Personnel and Responsibilities

The Proprietor

Holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring BIRS meets its safeguarding duties, appointing the DSL, and ensuring legal compliance.

The Principal

Ensures the policy is implemented effectively across all Key Stages, that staff are fully trained, and that the DSL is provided with sufficient resources and support.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Contact: Academic Director (contact@thebirs.co.uk)

Role: The DSL is the primary point of contact for all safeguarding and child protection concerns. Responsibilities include managing referrals, liaising with external agencies, providing advice to staff, maintaining secure records, and ensuring ongoing staff training.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Contact: The Principal (contact@thebirs.co.uk)

Role: Supports the DSL and acts in their absence.

All Staff (including volunteers and contractors)

- Have a duty to read, understand, and strictly adhere to this policy.
- Must remain vigilant to signs of abuse, neglect, and online risks, reporting any concerns immediately to the DSL.
- Must maintain rigorous professional boundaries online and adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct and Online Safety Policy.

4. Recognising Abuse and Neglect

Staff receive annual training to recognise the physical and digital indicators of abuse and neglect, including:

- Physical Abuse: Hitting, shaking, burning, or causing physical harm.
- Emotional Abuse: Persistent criticism, threats, humiliation, or withholding care.
- Sexual Abuse: Enticing a child into sexual activities or exposing them to inappropriate sexual content.
- Neglect: Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs.

Online-Specific Risks

- Cyberbullying: Bullying taking place online or via digital devices.
- Online Grooming: Building deceptive online relationships with children for sexual exploitation.
- Sexting: Creating, sending, or receiving sexually explicit digital images or videos.
- Exposure to Inappropriate Content: Violent, pornographic, extremist, or hateful digital material.
- Radicalisation and Extremism: Being targeted or exposed to extreme ideologies online.
- Online Harassment, Stalking, and Data Privacy Breaches.

Contextual Safeguarding: BIRS recognises that harm can occur outside the home, including digital peer-to-peer abuse. We adopt a child-centred, environment-aware approach crucial to a virtual school context.

5. Reporting Procedures

5.1 Immediate Danger

If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of serious physical harm, staff must immediately contact local emergency services in the child's country of residence and notify the DSL.

5.2 Reporting Concerns

The reporting pathway follows five steps:

Step 1: Staff member identifies a concern or receives a disclosure

Step 2: Reports immediately, verbally or digitally, to the DSL or DDSL
Step 3: Submits a written Safeguarding Report Form within 24 hours
Step 4: DSL assesses the case and determines the action pathway
Step 5a — UK Student Pathway: refer to Local Authority Children's Services (LACS) / UK Police if needed Step 5b — International Student Pathway: refer to the Child Protection Agency in the student's country of residence / CEOP

Reporting: Any staff member who has a concern about a student's welfare or receives a disclosure must report it immediately to the DSL (or DDSL).

Documentation: This must be followed by a written report using the BIRS Safeguarding Reporting Form. Reports must be factual, detailing times, dates, individuals, and the exact words used by the child, without using leading questions or investigating.

Action: The DSL will assess the report and may provide internal support, refer the case to UK Local Authority Children's Services (LACS), or coordinate with local child protection authorities in the international student's country of residence.

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

Confidentiality: Safeguarding records are kept strictly confidential, shared only on a strict "need-to-know" basis, and stored in an encrypted database.

6. Safer Recruitment and Vetting

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

- All recruitment advertisements state our strict commitment to safeguarding.
- Application processes include rigorous shortlisting and safeguarding-focused interview questions.
- BIRS conducts robust identity, qualification, and employment history verification.
- We require Enhanced DBS checks for UK-based staff and equivalent international criminal record checks for overseas staff.
- At least two professional references are obtained and verified directly.
- Remote staff must complete user orientation and Code of Conduct training before instructing students online.

7. Online Safety and Digital Classroom Safeguards

- **Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs):** Clear digital behaviour parameters are enforced for staff, students, and parents regarding our VLE and communications.
- **Professional Environments:** Staff must conduct live lessons from appropriate, professional physical environments, avoiding private spaces like bedrooms or bathrooms. Backgrounds must be neutral, professional, or blurred.
- **One-to-One Session Safeguards:** Virtual 1:1 sessions are recorded with prior consent or conducted with visibility safeguards in place to protect both students and staff.
- **Official Channels Only:** All communication must occur through school-issued BIRS accounts; personal emails or personal social media channels are strictly prohibited.
- **Dress Code:** Both staff and students must adhere to a professional dress code during live video sessions.
- **Scheduled Hours:** Video lessons occur strictly during scheduled school hours.
- **Classroom Recording:** Recording live lessons for student review requires prior explicit parental consent and is stored in a secure, access-controlled directory.
- **Screenshots and Recording Prohibition:** Students are strictly prohibited from taking screenshots, recording, or sharing video/audio of live sessions, staff, or other students. Any breach will be addressed immediately via disciplinary and safeguarding protocols.
- **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Accessibility:** BIRS proactively identifies students requiring accommodations to ensure our remote platforms and lessons are accessible (utilising captions, transcripts, and adapted digital resources where feasible).

- **Assessment Proctoring and Privacy:** Online assessments are designed to balance academic integrity with student privacy, avoiding overly intrusive monitoring methods.

8. Training and Awareness

- **All Staff:** Receive comprehensive safeguarding, remote-teaching boundaries, and online-safety training at induction and at least annually thereafter.
- **DSL and DDSLs:** Complete advanced, specialist safeguarding training every two years.
- **Prevent Duty:** Staff receive training to identify signs of online radicalisation and extremism, ensuring our curriculum actively promotes fundamental British values and critical thinking.

9. Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Any allegation against a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to the Principal (or to the Proprietor if the allegation involves the Principal).

The DSL will be immediately informed, and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the UK will be consulted.

The accused individual may be suspended pending investigation, in line with HR procedures. BIRS will provide appropriate support to all parties involved throughout the process.

10. Record Keeping and Whistleblowing

Secure Storage: Safeguarding files, lesson recordings, and event logs are stored securely with strict access control in compliance with the UK GDPR and our Privacy Policy.

Whistleblowing: BIRS maintains a robust Whistleblowing Policy allowing staff to raise concerns regarding unsafe educational practices, policy breaches, or safeguarding failures without fear of reprisal.

Related Policies

- BIRS Privacy Policy
- BIRS Online Safety Policy
- BIRS Complaints Procedure
- BIRS Admissions Policy

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