

The British International School Istanbul Child Protection Policy

Our policy applies to all Governors, Directors, staff and volunteers working in the school. The policy should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour Management policy.

The aims and principles

In all the work that we do at BISI we see the rights, safety and welfare of children as paramount. This means that sometimes we have to take actions which some parents and carers could find threatening. In such cases we will work for a mutual understanding, we will explain our professional responsibilities and we will give every reassurance as to our motives but we will always stress that, for us, children's needs have to come first.

The school mission statement aims state that we strive to create a learning environment that promotes each individual to achieve their full potential. We prepare children to become critical thinkers in order for them to make informed decisions and become responsible members of the community. We take seriously our responsibilities to protect and safeguard the welfare of the children entrusted in our care.

As part of the ethos of the school, the staff and governors are committed to:

- encouraging and supporting parent/carers/guardians and working together in partnership with them
- listening to relating effectively with and valuing each individual student in our care
- ensuring that all school employees have been checked by the competent authorities before taking up employment. Current documented evidence should be kept on file. The same should be done for other adults who are regularly in contact with BISI students.
- ensuring that all members of staff, including teaching, volunteers, support, campus and administration, are properly supported.

We recognise that, some children today are the victims of neglect and/or physical, sexual or emotional abuse, and that school staff/volunteers by virtue of their day to day contact, with and knowledge of the students in their care, are well placed to identify such abuse and to offer support to children in need.

The role of the designated child protection officers

The designated child protection officers are Amanda Ilhan (Pre School & Primary School Deputy Director), Richard I'Anson (Pre School & Primary School Director) and William Bradley (Secondary Director). The principal elements of the role of the designated officers of child protection are:

- To coordinate action on child abuse within the school, ensuring that all staff/volunteers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection.
- To refer individual cases of suspected abuse to the Chairman of the Board of Governors on issues relating to child protection.

Safe Recruiting

The school follows a policy of safe recruiting. Checks are required for all adults that come in contact with students.

- For those appointed from the UK or who have worked in the UK, the school initiates CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) checks.
- For those appointed from other countries, the relevant police or other check are required, as listed on the English CRB website.
- For Turkish citizens, a certificate from the Public Prosecutor's Office in their area of residency or the General Directorate for Criminal Records in Ankara, is required.

What a member of staff/volunteers should do in a case of suspected or alleged abuse

If a member of staff/volunteer has any suspicions as a result of something that a child has said or that they have noticed they should report it directly to the Directors.

If the designated officers for child protection are not available they should report their concerns to Campus Coordinator/Dean of Students.

Staff must:

- allow a child to make the disclosure at their own pace and in their own way
- avoid interrupting, except to clarify what the child is saying
- not probe for any information that the child does not volunteer

Allegations against members of staff/volunteer

When dealing with an allegation against a member of staff/volunteer, it is vital to keep the welfare of the child as the central concern, as with standard child protection procedures. A balance needs to be struck between supporting and protecting the child and keeping the effects of a possible false allegation to a minimum.

In dealing with any allegation the officers and the governors need to balance:

- the seriousness of the allegation
- the risk of harm to children
- possible contamination of evidence
- the welfare of the person concerned

Any allegation against a Director/Child Protection Officer should be reported to the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

It is important for staff to avoid allegations of incautious behaviour with students. For example, one-to-one tuition, sports coaching, conveying a student by car, or engaging in inappropriate cyber/mobile telephone communication with a student. It is unrealistic to suggest that staff should never touch students. We recognise that at times of distress touch is one way of offering reassurance and comfort. However, touch is a sensitive issue. Touching may be misconstrued and can feel invasive.

Allegations of abuse by one or more students against another

If the school's behaviour policy is not sufficient, the procedure for adults should be followed.

Reporting Cases of Abuse

BISI recognises that it is an agent of referral and not of investigation. It fully accepts that the investigation of child abuse is the responsibility of the relevant police department and will do everything possible to support and assist them in their task.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors is responsible for reporting cases of actual or suspected abuse to the relevant police department within 24 hours. Contact details are as follows:

The Police Department in charge of child/student related issues in Besiktas: 0212 263 61 24

The Police Department in charge of child/student related issues in Sariyer: 0212 287 88 94

In the case of a member of staff/volunteer, it is the responsibility of the Chairman of the Board of Governors to report to the authorities, anyone whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children.

Record Keeping

Any member of staff/volunteer receiving a disclosure of abuse from a child or noticing signs or symptoms of possible abuse in a child must make notes as soon as possible (e.g. within one hour), on our Incident Report Form, writing down as exactly as possible what was said or seen, putting the scene into context and giving the time and location. Dates and times of events should be recorded as accurately as possible, together with a note of when the record was made.

All hand written notes will be kept, even if they are subsequently typed up in a more formal report.

All records of a child protection nature should be handed to the designated officer and will be kept securely by him/her. Access to those records is on a need to know basis and decisions about access will be made by the designated officer.

When a child leaves the school, the designated officer will inform the child's new school immediately and discuss with the child's key/class teacher the transfer of any confidential information the school may hold.

A vital part in detecting abuse is effectively monitoring and recording of children's progress and behaviour in school. This is particularly important where a child is giving cause for concern but there has been no disclosure or physical evidence of abuse, or if the child had communication difficulties or is too young to give much verbal information.

Records need to be as accurate and objective as possible. Signs of physical injury, instances of behavioural disturbance or disclosures should be recorded as precisely and as soon as possible. Explanation of injuries given by the child or an adult need to be recorded accurately. Key features of a biographical report are:

- it should record the child's full name, age and date of birth, and the parents' names and addresses
- it should be written in a formal but clear style
- any assessment needs to be supported by evidence
- it must make clear that any questions the child was asked were open ended and that the child was not put under pressure
- it should use the child's own words
- it should present any conclusions reached by staff/volunteers as their views and not as fact.

The designated officer for child protection has the responsibility for collating and reviewing as well as maintaining and storing the records.

Confidentiality

Staff/volunteers must make it clear to a child who is making a disclosure that they cannot keep the information confidential.

We need to keep a delicate balance between how much information to divulge and to whom, about a child, who has/may have been abused: members of staff/volunteers need to be alerted about the concerns about the child, who also needs to be protected from too many people knowing everything about their lives. All staff need to understand that information should only be shared on a need to know basis.

Informing Parents

The BISI's Child Protection Policy is available on the school website. It is also included in the staff handbook.

Supporting children and their families

There is a need for great support for any child undergoing a child protection referral and investigation and often the support is limited to what we as a school can offer.

We aim at least to provide a secure school environment in which the child feels valued and protected.

The designated officers will whenever possible make themselves available to discuss individual children or situations with concerned members of staff/volunteers.

We will offer support wherever possible to the family of the child or children involved in a child protection investigation within the time and expertise constraints of its role and its staff.

The welfare of the child remains paramount and all staff/volunteers must remember the limits of confidentiality and the requirements of the law of the land.

The Curriculum

Staff will use many different elements of the school's PSHE curriculum to raise children's awareness and build their confidence so that they have a range of contacts and strategies to ensure their own protection and that they understand the importance of protecting others.

Training

One of the designated child protection officers will receive refresher training every two years. This training will normally be provided through the annual COBIS (Council of British International Schools) conference. All staff (including part-time staff and volunteers) will receive training from the trained child protection officer.

The role of the Governors

The Chairman of the Board of Governors will liaise where necessary and with due regard to issues of confidentiality with the designated officers about allegations of abuse.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors will review the policy annually and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged.

This policy is under constant review. Any deficiencies or weaknesses will be remedied without delay.