

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2026

Summary

The International British Theatre School (IBTS) is committed to ensuring that all children in our care are protected from harm, abuse, neglect, and radicalisation.

We aim to provide a safe and inclusive environment that promotes the physical and emotional wellbeing of every child.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility — all staff, volunteers, and contractors share a collective duty to protect children and promote their welfare.

1. Policy Statement

IBTS has a '**culture of safety**' where safeguarding is embedded into every aspect of our operations.

We will:

- Respond promptly to any safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure all staff understand their responsibilities and are trained appropriately.
- Work closely with local safeguarding partners, Ofsted, and social care professionals.

This policy applies to all IBTS staff, freelancers, contractors, volunteers, and visitors.

2. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

A **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** is available at all times while the school or camp is operational.

The DSL coordinates safeguarding, manages disclosures, and liaises with external agencies (e.g. Social Care, LADO, Ofsted, and Police).

DSL: Ben Whiteside (Director)

Deputy DSLs: Appointed Camp Leaders (on rotation during each site)

The DSL will ensure all staff receive regular safeguarding updates and that child protection procedures are implemented effectively.

3. Recognising Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is any form of maltreatment that causes actual or potential harm. It may involve direct acts or neglect through failure to act.

Types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** Hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise inflicting physical harm.
- **Emotional abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment or humiliation causing harm to a child's emotional development.
- **Sexual abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities, including non-contact acts such as exposure or inappropriate communication.
- **Neglect:** Persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs — food, shelter, protection, medical care, or supervision.

Staff must also be alert to **child-on-child abuse**, **domestic abuse exposure**, **FGM**, **forced marriage**, and **online grooming**.

4. Signs of Abuse

Warning signs may include:

- Unexplained injuries or changes in behaviour.
- Deterioration in wellbeing or sudden withdrawal.
- Frequent absences or lateness.
- Disclosure of harm or inappropriate adult behaviour.
- Access to extremist materials or expressing extremist views.

Any concern — however small — must be reported to the DSL immediately.

5. Responding to Concerns or Disclosures

If a child discloses abuse or a member of staff suspects harm:

1. **Listen carefully** and remain calm.
2. **Reassure** the child they have done the right thing.
3. **Do not question or investigate.**
4. **Record** what has been said using the child's exact words.
5. **Report** immediately to the DSL.

Staff must not promise confidentiality — information will be shared only with those who need to know to protect the child.

6. Recording and Reporting

All incidents, concerns, or disclosures must be logged on the **Safeguarding Concern Form** and submitted to the DSL the same day.

Each record must include:

- Date, time, and names of those involved.
- Description of concern or disclosure (in child's own words).
- Actions taken and who was informed.
- Signature and role of the person making the record.

The DSL will decide the next steps and, if necessary, contact **Children's Social Care** or the **LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)** within 24 hours.

If staff feel the concern is not handled appropriately, they are legally entitled to contact Social Care directly.

7. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is illegal and a form of child abuse.

Staff have a **mandatory duty** to report any known case of FGM in under-18s to the **police**.

All staff receive FGM awareness training and understand signs such as sudden absences, emotional distress, or mention of “special ceremonies”.

8. Child-on-Child Abuse

IBTS recognises that abuse can occur between children.

This includes physical violence, sexual harassment, sexting, coercion, and bullying (in person or online).

Such behaviour will never be dismissed as “banter” or “part of growing up”.

All incidents will be recorded and managed following this policy and relevant behaviour procedures.

9. Extremism and Radicalisation (Prevent Duty)

IBTS has a legal duty under the **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015** to prevent people being drawn into terrorism.

We promote respect, inclusion, and critical thinking through arts education.

Staff will be alert to signs of radicalisation, including:

- Withdrawn behaviour or isolation.
- Justification of violence.
- Expression of extremist views or online activity involving extremist material.

Concerns will be reported to the **DSL**, who may contact:

- Local Authority Prevent Coordinator
- Police (101) or Anti-Terrorist Hotline (0800 789 321)

- 999 in emergencies
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10. Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

If an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member, volunteer, or contractor:

- The DSL will report it immediately to the **LADO** and **Ofsted**.
- Telephone reports will be followed up in writing within **48 hours**.
- The staff member may be suspended pending investigation.
- If appropriate, a referral will be made to the **DBS** for barring consideration.

Staff must never attempt to investigate allegations themselves.

11. Whistleblowing

All staff are encouraged to report any concern about unsafe practice or potential failures in safeguarding.

Reports can be made directly to the **Director**, **DSL**, or **Ofsted** on **0300 123 1231**.

IBTS maintains a no-blame culture that supports open communication and accountability.

12. Use of Mobile Phones, Cameras, and Technology

- Only the **IBTS camera** or authorised device may be used to photograph children.
 - Personal phones or smartwatches must never be used to take photos or videos.
 - Parental consent is required for all photography.
 - For details, see the **Mobile Phones and Wearable Technology Policy 2026**.
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13. Staff Training and Awareness

- All staff receive safeguarding induction training before starting work.
 - The **DSL and deputies** hold Level 3 Designated Safeguarding Lead Training, renewed every 3 years.
 - Safeguarding is a standing item at every staff meeting.
 - Annual refresher training and Prevent awareness sessions are mandatory.
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14. Monitoring and Review

- The DSL and Director review this policy annually or after any incident.
 - The **Safeguarding File** is maintained securely on each site.
 - Updates to legislation or Ofsted guidance are incorporated promptly.
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Reviewed: 15 November 2025

Next Review Due: 15 November 2026

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Ben Whiteside

Policy Owner: Ben Whiteside, Director

International British Theatre School