



Department
for Education

British schools overseas: standards and inspection arrangements

Government consultation

Launch date 26 November 2015

Respond by 17 February 2016

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Introduction

This consultation seeks views on the Department for Education (DfE)'s proposed changes to the British schools overseas (BSO) standards for schools.

Who this is for

- Schools overseas which are, or are interested in being, inspected under the British Government's voluntary inspection scheme;
- independent inspectorates;
- representative organisations and associations of schools overseas;
- parents and prospective parents.

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 26 November 2015.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team on:

- 01325 340580 or 01325 340405 and ask for Elaine Haste.

or email:

BritishSchools.OVERSEAS@education.gsi.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The response

The results of the consultation and the Department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in Spring 2016.

About this consultation

This consultation seeks your views on proposed revisions to the standards for British schools overseas (BSOs). The standards have not been updated since they were introduced four years ago and we are now seeking to bring them into line with the standards for Independent schools in England (ISS). We want the BSO quality to be recognisably on a par with independent schools in England and so we have set out the proposed standards for BSOs in the same way as the ISS. While we are very aware that BSOs must operate within the cultural and legal context of their host country, we also think that the essence and values of a British education should be evident in the way a BSO operates. We understand that this proposed alignment with the ISS will bring real challenges for some schools but it is important that the BSO standards are revised to ensure that parents and others can rely on the BSO 'brand' as a measure of real quality which is comparable with the education provided by independent schools in England.

The proposed standards for BSOs can be found at Annex A.

For comparison purposes, the current standards for independent schools in England can be found [here](#).

We would like to hear your views on our proposals.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit www.education.gov.uk/consultations to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it.

By email

- BritishSchools.OVERSEAS@education.gsi.gov.uk

By post

Elaine Haste
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Deadline

The consultation closes on 17 February 2016.

Draft revised standards

Background

In 2010 the UK Government established a voluntary scheme to recognise overseas schools which describe themselves as “British” and which are able to meet a set of standards set by the Department for Education (DfE). The scheme applies to schools which provide full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age. The standards are derived from and closely resemble the Independent School Standards which independent schools in England must meet.

Schools overseas can choose to adopt these standards and be inspected against them by an inspectorate approved by the DfE for this purpose. Schools which are found to be meeting the standards at inspection are recognised by the UK Government as British Schools Overseas, are given an Edubase number and are entitled to display the BSO emblem. This recognition currently lasts for three years from the date of inspection and can be renewed at each successful inspection.

The intention is to inform parents of pupils in British Schools Overseas how standards measure up against the standards that apply to independent schools in England. Inspectorates approved by the DfE and monitored by Ofsted will be available to inspect British Schools Overseas and produce inspection reports which will be made available to parents and prospective parents. This will inform parents and prospective parents about the quality of provision within the inspected school, and its compatibility with independent schools in England. An essential element of the inspection is considering the extent to which the British character of the school is evident in its ethos, curriculum, teaching, and care for pupils and pupils’ achievements. By achieving UK inspection based approval, participating schools will be able to demonstrate that they provide a British education that has similar characteristics to an education in an independent school in England.

Proposal and rationale

This section sets out the main changes in each of the standards. You will note that the criteria are now produced as standards rather than as questions to be answered, as in the current advice.

Standard 1 – the quality of education provided by the school

The Independent School Standards (ISS) which apply to independent schools in England have recently been revised to raise the bar on education and to make them generally more rigorous than the previous standards.

Question 1: Do you support applying the same standards for BSOs regarding quality of education as for independent schools in England?

Standard 2 – the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The new SMSC standard for independent schools in England requires schools to “actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”.

The ISS also require schools to “actively promote principles which...encourage respect for other people, paying particular regards to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010,” (Part 2, paragraph 5(b)(vii)). The protected characteristics are:

- (a) age
- (b) disability
- (c) gender reassignment
- (d) marriage and civil partnership
- (e) pregnancy and maternity
- (f) race
- (g) religion or belief
- (h) sex
- (i) sexual orientation

Question 2: Having regard to the local context of host countries do you see issues with applying the same SMSC standards for BSOs as for independent schools in England? Please comment on what are they and how might they be overcome.

Standard 3 – the welfare and safety of pupils

This part makes the same expectations of BSOs as of independent schools in England.

Question 3: Do you support applying the same welfare, health and safety standards for BSOs as for independent schools in England?

Fire safety – we want fire safety in BSOs to be at least as good as in independent schools in England.

Question 4: Does the proposed wording “ensures compliance with fire standards which are at least as stringent as the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005” make that clear?

Question 5: Is this workable for your school?

Standard 4 – the suitability of the proprietor, staff and supply staff to work with children

Part 4 of the ISS contains detailed requirements on checking the suitability of staff. Some of this is not applicable to BSOs, while there are other considerations relating to the recruitment of staff overseas. The revised standards are intended to ensure a rigorous but practicable approach.

Question 6: Do you agree that the revised standards regarding suitability of staff, supply staff and governors are appropriate and can be delivered?

Standard 5 – the premises and accommodation

Part 5 was written with schools in England in mind but should be applicable to BSOs wherever they may be located.

Question 7: Do you support applying the same premises and accommodation standards for BSOs as for independent schools in England?

Standard 6 – the provision of information for parents, carers and others

This part largely replicates the ISS although references to children with education and health care plans, which only apply in England, have been removed.

Question 8: Do you support applying the same standards on provision of information for BSOs as for independent schools in England?

Standard 7 – manner in which complaints are handled

This part also mirrors the ISS.

Question 9: Do you support applying the same standards for BSOs as for independent schools in England?

Standard 8 – quality of leadership and management of the school

BSOs already had a leadership and management standard. This part brings it in line with the new leadership and management standard for independent schools in England.

Q10. Do you support applying the same standards of leadership and management for BSOs as for independent schools in England?

Standard 9 – the quality of provision for boarding

This part only applies to BSOs which have boarding provision. We have largely replicated the national minimum standards for Boarding schools in England to afford a similar level of quality for boarding provision in BSOs.

Question 11: Do you support applying the same boarding standards for BSOs as for independent schools in England?

General questions

Question 12: Are there any standards which are not clear and which inspectors would find it difficult to find evidence for?

Question 13: Are there any standards which would be difficult to meet because of the local context of the country in which the school operates and how might they be overcome?

Question 14: Schools may currently use a BSO logo once they have passed their inspection. Do you have any comments on the logo or its use?

Inspection questions

It is important to maintain the high quality of the BSO scheme and it is the inspection regime which provides the assurance that schools are meeting the robust standards.

Question 15: Are the arrangements for the inspection of BSOs satisfactory? Do you have any comments based on your experience of being inspected as a BSO which would help improve the inspection regime?

We want to strike the right balance between assuring that BSO standards are being maintained and that burdens on schools are not excessive.

Question 16: Do you think that the inspection frequency for BSO recognition purposes should be (a) 3 years; (b) 4 years; or (c) 5 years?



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