UK Government

BSO
British School Overseas

The UK Government's Accreditation for British International Schools



Promoted by:

Department for Education

Department for Business & Trade

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

What is a BSO?

British Schools Overseas (BSO) are schools around the world which are maintained and accredited against criteria set by the UK Government's Department for Education (DfE). These reflect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and respect. In doing so, local laws and customs take precedence and are fully taken into consideration and do not affect the outcome of inspection.

The term 'British Schools Overseas' (BSO) may only be officially used by a school that has been inspected by a UK Government approved BSO Inspectorate within the last 3 years. Only schools with valid BSO accreditation can call themselves 'British Schools Overseas'.

For more information see: www.gov.uk/guidance/british-schools-overseas-inspection-scheme

What is BSO accreditation?

The DfE's BSO inspection scheme is voluntary for overseas schools. Overseas schools describing themselves as 'British' may choose to undergo a BSO inspection. Schools that meet the inspection standards are then officially recognised by the UK Government under this accreditation scheme, and will subsequently be able to access a number of unique benefits of BSO accreditation.

The DfE has put in place arrangements for inspection against a common set of BSO Standards which compare to the Independent School Standards in England.

All BSO inspection reports are available on the .GOV.UK website for parents and prospective parents to read, informing them on the the quality of provision within the inspected school.

BSO reports inform parents about the quality of provision within the inspected school, allowing direct comparison with the inspection reports of Independent Schools in England

Who can be accredited as a BSO?

Any British school operating overseas wishing to achieve BSO accreditation can do so by having a BSO inspection every 3 years. A school's performance against the BSO Standards must be at least 'Satisfactory' in order to be awarded BSO.

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, care for pupils and pupils' achievements. By achieving BSO accreditation, participating schools will be able to demonstrate that they provide a British education with similar characteristics to an education in an Independent School in England. The inspection scheme also takes into account local laws, customs and traditions ensuring that outcomes both reflect and celebrate the international nature of schools.

What are the benefits of BSO accreditation?

There are several reasons a British curriculum school located outside the UK would submit itself to the rigorous BSO inspection system and these may vary from country to country and school to school. The benefits of BSO include:

- **UK Government accreditation.** BSO schools have the right to display the 'BSO Inspected' logo on their websites and publications.
- **Benchmark against leading Independent Schools.** Schools that have successfully undergone a BSO inspection demonstrate to the international school community that they have reached the standard the DfE require of Independent Schools in England.
- **Ofsted monitored external validation.** The Board of Governors may wish to use an Ofsted monitored BSO inspection to evidence how well their school is operating.
- **Become a DfE registered BSO**. BSOs become officially DfE registered, are listed on the .GOV.UK website, and are uniquely the only British international schools given a DfE Number (GIAS).
- **Support Early Career Teacher (ECT) Statutory Induction**. BSO schools are the only schools eligible to offer DfE regulated ECT Induction in an international setting.

Applying the BSO Standards globally

Within the BSO Standards it is recognised that schools in different countries may have to produce and implement policies, or take action, in accordance with local regulations. It is not the purpose of these standards to ensure compliance with local regulation. However, the expectation is that the standards implemented by schools will ensure policies and procedures of a quality at least as high as those required in Independent Schools in England.

During inspection, schools must provide evidence to their BSO inspectorate that each standard has been met, and confirm to the inspectorate that to the best of their knowledge and belief, the school complies with all local regulatory requirements, and that there is no information available to them indicating that the school would have to close in the foreseeable future.

Where there is a conflict between the BSO Standards and local laws and customs, the requirements of the host country take precedence, are fully taken into consideration and do not affect the outcome of inspections.

Any departures from the standards due to host country requirements should be communicated to inspectors so that they can be noted in inspection reports.

Where the BSO Standards require a school to make information available, the requirement is satisfied by placing a copy of the information on the school's website.

Where necessary provision must be made to supply parents with paper copies on request.



BSO Inspectorates

BSO Inspectorates are approved by the DfE and monitored by Ofsted to inspect British curriculum schools outside the UK, produce inspection reports and recommend the award of BSO. Ofsted independently reports on the quality of the approved organisation's inspections.

From September 2026 the following inspectorates are approved by the DfE to inspect and report on British Schools Overseas:

Education Development Trust

www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com
enquiries@educationdevelopmenttrust.com

ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

www.isi.net
BSO-inspections@isi.net

Following inspection the BSO Inspectorate will provide feedback to the DfE, advise on whether the school meets all the BSO Standards and whether the award of BSO is appropriate.

The DfE do not have a role in fee setting for BSO inspections. For a quotation on BSO inspection schools are advised to contact one or more of the DfE approved inspectorates directly.



BSO and the UK's International Education Strategy

The United Kingdom's education system is one of its greatest global assets, recognised internationally for its quality, excellence and influence. The 2026 International Education Strategy reaffirms the UK Government's ambition to make the UK the global partner of choice at every stage of learning, recognising education as a driver of international partnerships, economic growth and global influence.

The Strategy is jointly led by the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Working with the British Council, the International Education Champion and the Education Sector Action Group, Government will strengthen international partnerships and promote UK education worldwide.

The Strategy places renewed emphasis on British Schools Overseas (BSO), recognising that the rigorous BSO accreditation process drives international demand by assuring parents and governments of the quality, safeguarding and integrity of British education overseas. It also notes that more than 300 schools across over 60 countries are accredited through the BSO programme, with Ofsted providing oversight of inspection arrangements.



The Government's commitment is set out clearly in Action 13 of the International Education Strategy:

"The DfE and DBT will coordinate efforts across government and key sector bodies to promote the quality and safety of our schools, both in the UK and overseas, by advocating the British Schools Overseas inspection scheme. In addition, we will encourage independent schools to have a better understanding of guardian arrangements, learning from those schools that do this well and the important role of accreditation bodies."

This commitment reinforces the BSO accreditation scheme as the gold standard for assuring quality, safeguarding and educational excellence in British schools overseas.

Support for BSOs and aspiring BSOs

The following DfE partner associations are available to provide help and support to both BSOs and aspiring BSOs.

Association of British Schools Overseas (AoBSO)
www.aobso.uk
admin@aobso.uk

British Schools in the Middle East (BSME)
www.bsme.org.uk
business@bsme.org.uk

Council of British International Schools (COBIS)
www.cobis.org.uk
accreditation@cobis.org.uk

Federation of British International Schools in Asia (FOBISIA)
www.fobisia.org
info@fobisia.org

Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS)
www.iaps.uk
iaps@iaps.uk

Latin American Heads Conference (LAHC)
www.lahc.net
sofiahughes@lahc.net

National Association of British Schools in Spain (NABSS)
www.nabss.org
nabss@acade.es