

International Task Force on Child Protection

June 2016 Report: Outcomes & Recommendations

The work of the International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP) has been undertaken by a coalition of 90+ volunteers, leaders of international education organisations, school leaders, counsellors, business and security managers and teachers, school accreditation, inspection and recruitment professionals, working collaboratively across professions with dedicated law enforcement officials and the medical community. It is this broad collaboration and diverse perspective from a variety of roles which has enriched our discussion and now, our results.

From our origin in May of 2014, our charter has been to apply our collective resources, expertise, and partnerships to help international school communities address child protection challenges.

Today, we announce significant outcomes of our work, now completed by three volunteer committees.

✓ **Child Protection website launched ...in cooperation with ICMEC**

Our partnership with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) has resulted in the creation of an [Education Portal](#) at the new ICMEC website, where school communities can access child protection resources, and report suspected or known abuse. This is a significant step forward as we now have a reliable source for trusted resources. In an advisory role, the ITFCP will continue to curate resources for the site, and provide guidance and access to reliable experts in law enforcement so that school communities can confidentially seek advice when they suspect or detect abuse.

Chair of the School Policies and Resources Committee, Greg Hedger, emphasized a significant finding of the committee: while resources are important, each school must ensure it is asking the right questions about behaviour. The Committee also cited the importance of having a Code of Conduct as a reference point, and its use to change school culture in detecting and reporting abuse.

✓ **Accreditation and Inspection agencies agree on recommendations to enhance standards for Child Protection**

Demonstrating strong collaboration, Accreditation and Inspection agencies evaluating international schools have now officially agreed and signed their names to a document which commits us all to the implementation of enhanced standards for child protection in schools. It was an historic morning in Atlanta on Sunday, 7 February as all of the U.S. regional accreditation agencies and CIS came together and signed the new standards for child protection as recommended by the International Task Force School Evaluation Committee. Adoption of these recommendations continued the following week when the International Baccalaureate (IB) added their signature, and subsequently on 9 May in London when the Council of British International Schools (COBIS), the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), of the UK, and agencies conducting British inspection overseas simultaneously endorsed the agreement.

The new standards are articulated in two distinct domains:

- **Essential Questions:** 13 Questions which should be comprehensively considered and which form the basis of whole school community dialogue on policies and practices related to safeguarding and child protection.
- **Expectations:** 18 Essential Elements which school evaluation, accreditation and inspection agencies are strongly encouraged to adopt as essential requirements within their evaluation programmes as appropriate.

The recommendations are fully aligned with the values statements contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The agreed expectations will now be put into practice during the coming year. The formal statement including essential questions and expectations for schools can be found at the [ICMEC Education Portal](#).

As Ray Davis, Chair of the ITFCP School Evaluation Committee, concluded his final report in Atlanta, several of the accreditation agency directors spoke of the importance of identifying areas of challenge as schools begin to be evaluated using the new standards. They expressed a keen and unified sense of responsibility to support schools as we prepare to implement the new standards for child protection. We will continue to confer across agencies and will use this information to develop new resources to support schools.

✓ **Essential Recruiting Practices recommended following pilot at 75 international schools**

Essential Recruiting Practices for international school communities have been formulated following a year-long pilot at 75 schools globally. The International Task Force Recruitment Committee produced a checklist of core and recommended recruiting practices for schools to use when screening and assessing candidates. This document, containing the full set of recommendations, has been posted at the [ICMEC Education Portal](#).

As a first step in adopting these recommendations, the Task Force strongly recommends that all schools broadly post a statement of commitment to safer recruitment practices in all places, including the following statement on all documents used as part of their recruitment and selection processes:

Aligned with the recommendations of the International Task Force on Child Protection, we hold ourselves to a high standard of effective recruiting practices with specific attention to child protection.

Co-Chairs of the School Recruitment Committee, Bridget McNamer and Chris Akin, summarized key observations made by participating schools during the year-long pilot of rigorous recruiting practices:

- the continuing poor performance of school leaders in verifying references;
- the use of a Code of Conduct emerged strongly as an effective reference point to assess behaviour that moves past the boundaries of educational roles; and
- there are difficulties obtaining criminal background checks, and even more difficulties vouching for their validity.

✓ **Interpol International Police Certificate**

Interpol has now launched an initiative to create one police certificate which would reflect criminal background checks in all 190 member countries. Members of the Task Force will be working with Interpol as the feasibility study gets underway as there is significant potential for this initiative to improve the accessibility and reliability of background checks.

✓ **Child Protection Survey reveals three significant findings**

International School Training Needs Survey, September 2015

Our survey of 716 international educators revealed that almost half lack confidence in their abilities to detect abuse and that 90% believe annual training should be required and provided. They identified cultural difference as one of the primary barriers to reporting abuse. The full survey results can be found at the new ICMEC [Education Portal](#).

Our future role:

We now move forward in an advisory role as enhanced standards for child protection are implemented in schools, to confer and collaborate with external agencies to identify, gather and provide resources to the international school community to support your development of child protection programmes. We intend that our work will have tremendous positive impact in

our schools, and to this purpose, we welcome opportunities to report on our work and discuss our findings.

In an advisory role, we will focus on four areas of involvement:

- 1) To inform and advise multiple international and national organizations and schools of the outcomes of our work.
- 2) To advise ICMEC as they continue to gather and post resources at their new online Education Portal. (ICMEC will hire a part-time staff person to serve as curator for the site.)
- 3) To establish a continuing link with Accreditation, Inspection, Law Enforcement and Recruiting agencies to identify areas of challenge that need continuing focus to strengthen school practices.
- 4) To continue to identify experts who excel in providing support and training to school communities.

As we provide this final summary of the outcomes of our committee work, we recognize the tremendous collaboration and service of 90+ volunteers during the past two years. On behalf of the founding organizations of the Task Force, we thank each of them for stepping forward to give so generously of their time, leading us forward.

Last but not least, each of the ITFCP founding organizations, among many others, are now taking steps, related to their unique missions and purposes, to further support international school communities as we address child protection challenges. A full list of our activities and resources is attached.

On behalf of the founding members of the Task Force, and in your service,

Jane Larsson, Chair, International Task Force on Child Protection

Founding Members of the International Task Force on Child Protection

- Colin Bell, Executive Director, Council of British International Schools
- Deborah Welch, Executive Director, Academy of International School Heads
- Christine Brown, Regional Education Officer for Europe, U.S. Department of State, Office of Overseas Schools
- Yolanda Murphy-Barrena, Executive Director, Association for the Advancement of International Education
- Paul DeMinico, Vice-President, International Schools Services
- Jane Larsson, Executive Director, Council of International Schools (Chair)
- Kevin Ruth, Executive Director, ECIS