

Blog post

## British international schools: Are teachers and school leaders qualified?

Timothy Lynch, School Leader, British Schools Overseas (BSO) • 31 Jul 2023

Parents who choose to send their child to a British School Overseas (BSO) do so for quality assurance of a British education, one which promises the highest of standards but also comes at a cost – as high as [20,000 pounds sterling per year](#). In government-maintained schools in England, which are free, it is a safeguarding requirement to employ qualified teachers (DfE, 2022). However, in international schools, alarmingly, it is recognised that while everyone working as a teacher *should be* qualified, not all staff members being employed as teachers (and school leaders) *are* qualified (Kissock, 2017).

Axiomatically, evidence suggests that there is a correlation between the quality of teacher preparation and the quality of education provided by teachers and school leaders (Australian Government, 2021; Lynch, 2019). It can be presumed, therefore, that British schools promising the highest of standards not only implement the National Curriculum for England but also employ qualified teachers. However, the findings from a recent Council of British International Schools (COBIS) large-scale research project, based on 1,600 surveys from senior leaders and teacher participants in British International Schools, found that 43 per cent of senior leaders believed there was a need for Initial Teacher Training qualifications to train local and *international staff* (such as international qualified teacher status, iQTS) (COBIS, 2022, p. 17). Hence, in the big business of international education, questions are being raised about quality assurance, standards and qualifications.

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The UK Department for Education (DfE) provides standards for British School Overseas (DfE, 2023). The Education Development Trust, Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and Penta International are organisations approved by the British government for the purpose

of inspecting schools overseas and are quality assured by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The inspection and accreditation of a BSO supposedly offers evidence that the international school meets nine standards; importantly, this includes ‘Part 4: Suitability of staff and

proprietors', where all teachers must meet the host country's employment law and are suitable to work with children (DfE, 2023). The host country's requirements for foreign teachers being employed take precedence over any other requirements – an example is in Egypt where to comply with Egyptian employment law, successful applicants must have qualified teacher status (QTS) and a minimum of three years' teaching experience post-QTS.

Following the recent [death of Headteacher, Ruth Perry](#), school inspections as a whole have been [questioned](#), including the experience and qualifications of the inspectors. In English maintained schools, His Majesty's Inspectors are [required](#) to have QTS, as well as successful experience (over five years) in school senior leadership. However, unqualified teachers (who are [31 per cent cheaper](#)), can become inspectors in BSO and do not require any school senior leadership experience – this can have dire consequences (Fazackerley, 2023).

To gain QTS, a teacher would have to have first gained a certified teaching qualification such as a Bachelor of Education, or a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in addition to their graduate degree. A Master's in Education does not suffice the practical requirements to qualify someone as a teacher. Outdated condensed qualifications such as a Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), which was ceased by DfE more than 10 years ago, was never recognised internationally as an equivalent to QTS. The safeguarding policy 'Keeping children safe in education' requires that schools check QTS qualifications before employment and records are kept in a single central register. Also 'these checks are to continue following appointment' (DfE, 2022, p. 56). In addition, the Teaching Regulation Agency states that 'headteachers and governing bodies are responsible for managing teacher misconduct' (TRA, 2022, p. 4) which includes qualification fraud (see for example Morris, 2012).

If BSO schools knowingly employ unqualified teachers, then community transparency is a must. Parents spend large amounts of money under the guise that they are receiving the highest quality of education for their child. Having teachers who cannot evidence the fundamentals of teaching and learning is not acceptable. Hence, the single central register should be the starting point for any BSO inspections. If the school continues to promote that teachers are all QTS qualified when they are not, then they place themselves in an awkward position with regards to liability.

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