**COBIS Complaints Policy**

August 2020

**Overview**

COBIS schools all meet high standards of quality which are determined through the rigorous COBIS membership application process. A significant number of COBIS members have been quality assured through the COBIS Patron’s Accreditation and Compliance process, and/or inspected by British Government and/or COBIS recognised external inspectorates and accrediting bodies.

From time to time, however, a cause for complaint may arise. COBIS always takes seriously and considers carefully any complaint referred to it.  All formal complaints must follow this transparent procedure. All correspondence will be recorded and retained in accordance with data protection regulations.

Our response, and the scope and limits of our powers, are determined by our purposes as an organisation.  COBIS is able to consider matters of standards, policy and procedure. COBIS cannot, however, become involved in disputes between the school and its individual students, or parents or staff. This policy clearly states how we deal with this, and our procedure.

We offer clear guidance here about how we consider complaints.

COBIS exists to represent the collective interests of its member schools, to offer them opportunities for professional information, training and improvement, and to promote the quality and reputation of the best in British international education worldwide.

COBIS publishes standards that we expect and require of our member schools. These are expressed in the [COBIS Paton’s Accreditation and Compliance Standards](https://www.cobis.org.uk/join-us/the-patrons-accreditation-and-compliance), and in the very detailed criteria for independent inspection by accredited agencies as approved and monitored by the British Government, and by accrediting bodies – and also in Codes of Conduct published from time to time (for example the COBIS Codes of Ethical Conduct, and of Good Governance).

**Process**

Upon receipt of a complaint, we shall acknowledge it via email within two working weeks. The complaint will be considered as per the process below, unless there are defined reasons against this; for example where the complaint is summarily dismissed by COBIS or where the complaint is judged to be ultra vires.

In order for COBIS to take a complaint further, it will require confirmation from the complainant. That the complainant:

1. Has followed the school’s official complaints procedure, in full
2. Has read the COBIS Complaints policy and procedure and understands the scope and limits of COBIS’ role in this process.
3. Consents to details of the complaint, including any personal details (names etc) contained therein, being shared with the Headteacher/Principal of the school
4. Understands that information and correspondence related to the complaint, including any contact details supplied will be retained and stored securely by COBIS for the purposes of record keeping and future reference if required

Once COBIS has received written confirmation of the above, the Headteacher/Principal of the school in question will be notified of the complaint. If the complaint concerns the Headteacher/Principal, the complaint will be directed to the Chair of Governors as identified by the school.

COBIS will then request confirmation and evidence from the school that the school:

1. Has followed their official complaints procedure in this matter
2. Can provide evidence that the issue does not contravene or compromise any of the quality assurance/inspection standards or COBIS Guide to Ethical Conduct and/or COBIS Guide to Good Governance that are required to retain COBIS membership
3. Can provide evidence of their Complaints Policy and Procedure, plus any other relevant documents as requested by COBIS.

The feedback and evidence provided by the school will then be considered by the CEO along with the Vice Chairman. Where clear evidence is presented that suggests that a Board of Governors or Head have failed to meet our standards, then the Vice Chairman and COBIS CEO may contact the Board of Governors or Head to request explanation. In the event of an unsatisfactory response, the school’s membership may be reconsidered by the Board, and in serious cases suspended or terminated. In all cases, the judgement of COBIS is final.

If a satisfactory response is received from the school, COBIS will consider the matter closed and will inform the complainant of such. COBIS will use its discretion when feeding back to the complainant and is not obligated to provide detail of the school’s response to the complainant.

COBIS does not provide advice or guidance to individual complainants.

All official COBIS complaints are logged internally.

**Scope and limitations**

It must be clearly stated that COBIS considers matters of standards, policy and procedure. COBIS cannot, however, become involved in disputes between the school and its individual students, or parents or staff. These are matters for the Head of the School and for its Governing Body, as educational providers and employers, and to whom such complaints should be addressed. COBIS' judgement upon where it considers matters of standards, policy and procedure to end, and individual disputes to begin, is final. COBIS will not deal with any complaint which is currently involved in a 'live' legal dispute.

COBIS cannot, for the most part, process anonymous complaints. However, where anonymity is judged by COBIS to be appropriate and/or vital to a complaint process, it will be considered at that time. Furthermore, while we always seek positive and constructive resolution to any complaint, all correspondence from COBIS to a complainant or to a Board of Governors or Head must remain confidential and may be quoted or shared only with COBIS´s prior written permission.

Please address all complaints to Colin Bell, CEO and e-mail to pa@cobis.org.uk

*This policy will be reviewed annually. The next review date is August 2021.*