

## The Premier Association for British Schools Overseas



### Development Plan 2015-18

Dear Members,

This plan expresses what COBIS is, and its intentions and considered ambitions for the period ahead.

It contains a clear statement of our purpose and our expectations for membership. And it sets out the services and activities on behalf of our members that will be led by our CEO and his team.

We are a listening organisation: it is based upon open consultation with members and shaped by your elected Board.

Like all good plans, it will be periodically reviewed and refreshed – and provides a confident road map, with flexibility to respond to new opportunity or to changed circumstances.



Trevor Rowell (Chairman)



Colin Bell (CEO)

# What we are

## COBIS is the Premier Association for British Schools Overseas

It has developed into one of the most effective and active organisations for BSOs globally.

It exists to serve, support and represent its member schools  
– their leaders, governors, staff and students.

Membership is open globally to  
British international schools of quality.

We understand these terms to mean the following:

**British:** Schools recognised by COBIS are – regardless of their name – distinctively British. They offer a curriculum (learning programmes and assessments) wholly or substantially similar to those current in the United Kingdom; and they express a philosophy of education with those enriching features for which British education is renowned worldwide (including for example teaching that develops knowledge and also the skills of lifelong learning, encouragement of self-discipline, care for the development of the whole individual, and opportunities to develop talents in co-curricular activities). School leaders, teachers and support staff in our schools are trained or work in the British tradition.

**International:** British International schools in membership not only educate children of many different nationalities and operate in all parts of the world – but are also proud actively to promote international understanding.

**Schools:** COBIS Schools offer full-time education to children between the ages of 2-18 years. They may vary in their age range (including the early, primary and secondary years), and in their ownership (from not-for-profit foundations to private enterprises). Whatever the case, they are expected to satisfy our defined standards of ethical conduct and good governance.

**Of Quality:** COBIS admits into membership only schools which meet the high quality standards defined by us and either expressed in the overseas standards published by the British government, proven through inspection, or assured through internationally proven systems for school improvement. Full details of membership requirements can be found on our website.

## What we have recently achieved

COBIS has achieved a great deal during the last three years (the period of an earlier plan). We have:

- Attracted School Membership growth: more than doubling the number of schools of quality, from 100 to 200, offering an impressive professional network - and we are still growing.
- Trebled commercial, supporting members - from 50 to 150, extending substantially the network of support for services, advice and goods.
- Strengthened the executive team: we now have top-quality central support staff for services, CPD, communications, finance and administration.
- Introduced new membership services for mentoring and consultancy.
- Dramatically increased the range and quality of our professional development courses - reaching school leaders, and teachers, but also marketing and business managers, teaching assistants and governors.
- Improved access to our networks and services, with courses reaching well beyond Europe to Asia, Africa, South America the Middle and Far East, and frequent webinars of high quality and low cost on a wide range of topical issues.
- Improved electronic communication, with attractive newsletters and an informative website.
- Greatly extended activities for students, with highly popular and successful competitions including debating, the Science Film awards, and the COBIS Junior and Senior Games.
- Helped to achieve access to NQT status in accredited schools overseas, and extended the COBIS name and influence through extensive lobbying or co-operation with other governments and organisations (for example, UKTI, the FCO, the National College).
- Maintained highly competitive membership fees rates - while putting our growing income to work for members.
- Strengthened our governance, with committees to oversee financial planning, research and CPD, quality assurance, student activities and scrutiny of new applications for membership.
- Clarified our legal status with registration as a UK Ltd company, and ensured fiscal compliance.

This has extended, supported and professionalised the association - and provided a strong and confident platform upon which to develop further.

## What our members want next

Above all:

- Strong, supportive, experienced, accessible, and welcoming professional networks.
- Global access to CPD of high quality, for a wide range of staff and governors.
- Topical information and communication that is informative and never excessive.
- Effective representation and lobbying focussed on things that currently matter.
- Student activities and curricular contacts that encourage international understanding.
- Value for money and an organisation that listens.

Our aim in the period ahead is therefore to meet these wishes by offering services for our growing professional network. Our emphasis will always be upon quality, and not upon quantity or growth for its own sake. Where, however, growth can result in even stronger, better or more accessible support to our member schools, then it remains a worthy ambition.

## Medium & Longer – term aims 2015-2018 and beyond

The following are our overall aims during this three-year period. They will be periodically reviewed and refreshed to meet changing circumstances. Each is important, and the list does not express order of priority.

We plan:

1. **Membership:** To support current and future members by welcoming into membership British Schools Overseas from all parts of the world, where their quality meets our high standards.
2. **Quality:** To maintain the quality of membership, through active quality assurance that encourages high standards in schools and protects our reputation.
3. **Safeguarding:** To encourage the highest standards of child safeguarding in member schools, as a requirement of continuing membership.
4. **Professional Development:** To provide courses and networks of high quality that support the full range of school staff, and are increasingly accessible to our global membership.
5. **Research:** To undertake research that better informs us about our member schools, their character and contribution to British education overseas - and which provides reliable data to support their successful development.
6. **Students:** To offer inter-school educational activities of high quality that enable and encourage international understanding and enrich personal development.
7. **Representation:** To represent the interests of our members and of British school education overseas, to government, educational and other organisations both in the United Kingdom and abroad. In particular, to seek ways to support the supply of good teachers through initial teacher training (ITT) overseas in the British tradition.
8. **Market leadership:** To communicate the opportunities offered by the growth of British school education overseas, including those offered by overseas school leadership in an increasingly competitive market.
9. **Communication:** To maintain communication with members that is always informative and timely and never excessive; and to make available to members information on reform of the UK curriculum and assessment.
10. **Governance:** To maintain supervision and accountability that is always supportive of both members and executive; and which keeps the value and cost of membership under continual review.

# Objectives 2015-16

The following are our particular objectives for the current academic year.  
Each item is important, and the list does not express order of priority.

We shall:

1. **Membership:** Welcome new applications for membership using our online process; and scrutinise each application to ensure that it meets our stated standards. Operating a 3 year cycle, we shall also scrutinise evidence re-submitted by any member schools that has not yet undergone required inspection.
2. **Quality:** Maintain close relations with each approved inspectorate and assess the reports on and resulting action plans submitted by inspected schools. We shall also consider closely any proposed change in BSO standards, representing our views and informing members.
3. **Safeguarding:** Require the highest standards of child protection and safeguarding in member schools by promoting and processing criminal background employment checks in the form of Disclosure and Barring Service and the International Child Protection Certificate. In addition, as a condition of continuing membership, we will offer support in acquiring relevant high quality training.
4. **Professional Development:** Offer courses for leaders, teachers, business and marketing managers, and TAs, including for the first time in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.
5. **Research:** Encourage greater population of the COBIS membership database by schools, and develop and report on analysis of key areas including curriculum and assessment choice, examination results, student University destinations, and shared areas for school improvement and development.
6. **Students:** Continue to offer a student leader conference, and inter-school competitions in debating, science films, and poetry; and to hold the junior and senior Games in Athens, and to establish a music performance competition. The new COBIS World Student Magazine will also be launched; and professional assistance with administration of student activities will be considered."
7. **Representation:** Seek ways to enable initial teacher training (ITT) which can safeguard teacher supply to BSOs; represent our interests with and support the work of UKTI Education; enter co-operative activities where helpful with regional BSO associations; ensure a COBIS representation with other agencies where it is of value.
8. **Market leadership:** Hold seminars to help understanding of leadership opportunities in BSOs to support members in finding a field of high quality candidates in an increasingly competitive market.

9. Communication: Ensure that communication with members - through newsletters and information drops - is always informative and timely and never excessive.
10. Governance: Use the committee structure, annual appraisal of chairman and CEO, and consultation with members through questionnaires and conferences to maintain supervision and accountability that is always supportive of both members and executive.