

Schools Forum - Terms of Reference – PROPOSED VERSION

Background

Every Local Authority is required by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended to have a Schools Forum for its area. The constitution, conduct of meetings, functions and role of the Forum are determined by the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2015 and the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2017.

Introduction

The Schools Forum meets 5 times per year. Its representation consists of :

- Nursery, primary, secondary and special school heads
- Primary, secondary and special school governors
- A Southwark Diocesan Board of Education representative
- An Archdiocese of Southwark Schools' Commission representative
- A 14-19 Consortium representative
- An Early Years representative
- An Academies representative

The Forum is responsible for considering

- Any proposed changes to the schools' funding formula factors or criteria in accordance with regulations made under section 47 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- The financial effect of any such change.

Statutory Duties

The forum must be consulted and agree if the proposed percentage increase to the centrally managed share of the Designated Schools Grant (DSG) is greater than the overall DSG settlement increase.

Other responsibilities

Monitor and track schools with deficits to advise and support schools to gain the expertise with which to manage their finances effectively.

The Schools Forum is also consulted on:

- Arrangements to be made for the education of pupils with special educational needs
- Arrangement for early years education, the use of pupil referral units, the education of children otherwise than at school
- Insurance of school premises and professional indemnities

- Prospective revisions to the relevant authority's scheme of financing of schools
- Arrangements for free school meals
- Administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants
- Proposed contract for supplies or services paid out of the schools budget, e.g. catering
- De-delegation for mainstream schools for:
 - Contingencies
 - Administration of free school meals
 - Insurance
 - Licences/subscriptions
 - Staff costs – supply cover
 - Support for minority ethnic
 - Pupils/underachieving groups
 - Behaviour support services
 - Library and museum services
 - School Improvement
- Services previously funded by the ESG general duties rate.

Terms of Office

School and non-school members may serve for a period of three years. Subsequent re-election of existing members will be allowed. A member from the same representative group will replace members leaving early.

If a member has not attended a meeting in the last 6 months then a reminder will be sent to the member, if the member does not attend for 9 months the nominating body will be notified, in order for them to consider whether they want to appoint an alternative member.

Where a member leaves the organisation they are representing they will cease to be a member.

If a school changes its status (e.g. becomes an Academy) the term of office of any member representing schools of the original status will come to an end at the end of the academic year.

The Secretary of State has powers to remove from the Forum any non-school member representing an organisation which she/he has determined, should not hold membership of the Forum.

Declaration of interest

In order to show transparency, maintain confidence in and accountability of its members, School Forum members are expected to declare relevant personal, financial or business interest, which they or any person closely associated with them, has in any matter to be considered by the Forum. Each agenda will remind members of their obligations to declare interests on items proposed on it.

In considering the declaration of interest a member of the Forum should apply the following test: would a member of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, reasonably think that the member might be influenced by the interest.

There is not deemed to be a declarable interest where the Forum considers the allocation of resources between schools but there is, if their institute is the only one affected. A member should voluntarily declare their interest in an item and will be asked to retire from the room.

Quorum

A meeting is only quorate if **40%** of the current membership (excluding vacancies) is present. If a meeting is inquorate, it can proceed but it cannot legally take decisions (for example, election of a chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations). An inquorate meeting can respond to authority consultation, and give views to the authority. It would normally be good practice for the authority to take account of such 'unofficial' views, but it is not legally obliged to do so.

Substitutes

If a member is unable to attend a meeting it is permissible to send a substitute. The substitute for a Headteacher or Governor needs to be a fellow Headteacher or Governor.

Observers

Observers may attend all forum meetings but may not vote. Observers may not speak unless invited to do so by the chair.

Working Groups

The Forum may set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the forum itself to consider and approve.

Public access to meetings; publication of papers

Meetings of the Forum will be held in public, in common with other Council committees.

All agendas, minutes and reports will be published promptly on the Forum's website, upon being issued to members of the Forum.

Information on the Schools Forum and its deliberations will be included periodically in newsletters to Headteachers and Governors.