



# Schools Forum - Induction

March 2021



## Role of Schools Forum

The Forum is established in accordance with Section 47A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

The Forum is an advisory body in relation to matters relating to the schools budget as defined in Section 41 of the Education Act 2002 and set annually by Buckinghamshire County Council.

The Forum acts as a consultative body on some issues and a decision making body on others

## Role of Schools Forum

The forum acts in a **consultative role** for:

- changes to the local funding formula (the local authority makes the final decision)
- proposed changes to the operation of the minimum funding guarantee
- changes to or new contracts affecting schools (school meals, for example)
- arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in pupil referral units, and in early years provision

The forum **decides**:

- how much funding may be retained by the local authority within the dedicated schools grant (for example, providing an admissions service, or providing additional funding for growing schools)
- funding for central early years expenditure, which may include funding for checking eligibility of pupils for an early years place, the early years pupil premium, or free school meals
- any proposed carry forward of deficits on central spend from one year to the next
- proposals to de-delegate funding from maintained primary and secondary schools (for example, for staff supply cover, insurance, behaviour support)
- changes to the scheme of financial management

## Schools Forum Constitution

- Most recent version – June 2020
- To be updated annually
- Published on the Council website
- Outlines membership and terms of operation of the Schools Forum

## Schools Forum Membership

- DfE guidance stipulates that:
  - Schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the schools forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category, so the structure of Forum should be regularly reviewed, e.g. annually.
  - Membership should reflect most effectively the profile of education provision across the local authority to ensure that there is not an in-built bias towards any one phase or group.

## Schools Forum Membership

- The current constitution states that there shall be thirty members of the Forum comprising the following:
  - Thirteen elected schools members,
  - Eleven elected academies members,
  - Six other members.
- The break down of membership within those wider groups is detailed in the constitution

## Local Authority Representation on the Forum

- Only specific officers can speak at meetings of the schools forum.
- These officers are:
  - Director of Children's Services or their representative
  - Chief Financial Officer or their representative
  - Any person invited by the schools forum to provide financial or technical advice
  - Any person presenting a paper to the schools forum but their ability to speak is limited to the paper that they are presenting.

## Schools Forum Operation

- Schools Forum meetings are held in public
- Papers are published on the BC website and are published one week in advance
- Schools Forum meetings are usually held 5 times per year – January, March, June, October and December
- There are two sub-groups to Schools Forum
  - 1) Schools Forum Funding Group
  - 2) Early Years Forum
- Each has its own terms of reference
- There are also two further groups:
  - Maintained Schools Sub-Committee – considers requests for De-delegation
  - Contingency Panel – considers requests from maintained schools against the contingency
- It has further been agreed (January 2021) that the DSG Recovery Board will report into Schools Forum

## Schools Forum – Forward Plan

Shaped by:

- The budget cycle including any consultation on arrangements for any of the DSG funding blocks
- Government announcements and consultations on changes to funding arrangements for schools and early years
- Issues arising from governor and head teacher groups or other related workstreams eg, Inclusion Hub
- Major contract procurement affecting schools

## Effective Schools Forums

**DfE guidance** stresses effective relationship between LA and its Schools Forum needs the following characteristics:

- **Partnership:** Having a shared understanding of the priorities, issues and concerns of schools, academies and the local authority.
- **Effective Support:** The business of the schools forum is supported by the local authority in an efficient and professional manner.
- **Openness:** It is important that a schools forum feels it is receiving open, honest and objective advice from its local authority.
- **Responsiveness:** Local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their schools forums and their members. Schools forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests.
- **Strategic view:** Members of schools forum should consider the needs of the whole of the educational community, rather than using their position on a schools forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests.
- **Challenge and Scrutiny:** schools forums may be asked to agree to proposals from their local authority that will have an effect on all schools and academies in the local area. The extent to which schools forums can scrutinise and challenge such proposals is an important aspect of their effectiveness.