

Detailed guide: Schools forum: a guide for schools and academies

Information for schools and academies to understand the role of their schools forum.

Please note that this article was originally published by the EFA.

Introduction

The reform and simplification of local authority funding formulae has raised the profile of the work of schools forums.

The aim of this guide is to give schools and academies a clear understanding of the role of their local schools forum and encourage them to engage with them.

You can watch a video about [the importance of engaging with your local schools forum](#) with a chair of a schools forum in a discussion with an EFA expert.

The role of the schools forum

Representatives from schools and academies make up the schools forum. There is also some representation from non-school organisations, such as nursery and 16-19 education providers.

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

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 (eg school meals)
- 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 (eg for providing an admissions service or providing additional funding for growing schools)
- 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 (eg for staff supply cover, insurance, behaviour support)
- changes to the scheme of financial management

Schools' representation

Schools and academies' (including free schools) representatives on the forum should be roughly proportionate to the number of pupils in each sector and would generally include representatives from:

- maintained nursery schools
- maintained primary schools

- maintained secondary schools
- maintained special schools
- maintained pupil referral units
- mainstream academies (including free schools)
- special academies (including free schools)
- alternative provision academies (including free schools)
- post-16 education providers

Middle schools do not form a category of schools in their own right and school forums treat them according to their deemed status.

Where there is at least one school in a particular category, there must be at least one representative for that group on the forum.

In maintained schools, governors and headteachers (or their representatives) should elect their representatives by the appropriate phase.

Academy trusts should elect academy members in their local authority area.

Responsibilities of schools and their representatives

Schools can expect to have their views canvassed and to receive feedback from their representatives

Schools forum members have a responsibility to represent the interests of their peer group rather than the interests of their own individual school.

Schools staff and governors should make sure that the representatives they choose are competent to act as their advocates.

They should also ensure that they are aware of schools forum business and make their views known about decisions affecting schools' finance.

Responsibilities of local authorities

Local authorities must publish all schools forum papers well in advance of each meeting.

Any recommendations should be clear and local authority responsible officers should attend meetings to provide further information and advice. Local authority officers should not dominate the meeting.

All schools forum meetings must be open to the public. Observers do not have an automatic right to speak at meetings, but the chair may allow contributions where appropriate.

Further information

You can read more information in the [schools forums operational and good practice guide](#).

You can also read the [School Forum Regulations](#).

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