

Chairs and Vice-Chairs of School Governing Bodies

Briefing on The Schools Forum

14 January 2015

Role of the Schools Forum

- All LAs must have a Schools Forum
- Its membership and powers are closely regulated and monitored by the DfE
- Each Schools Forum oversees the funding for maintained schools, academies and early years providers in its local authority.
- The Forum acts as a consultative body on some issues and a decision making body on others

Membership

- The Schools Forum is made up of representatives of all types of publicly funded educational establishments providing for young people aged 0 – 25, including:
 - Maintained schools
 - Academies
 - Early Years providers
 - 14-19 education providers.
- Schools' and academies' representatives on the forum should be roughly proportionate to the number of pupils in each sector
- Where there is at least one school in a particular category, there must be at least one representative for that group on the forum.

Barnet Schools Forum

Category	Representatives
Nursery schools	1 headteacher
Primary community schools	4 headteachers , 3 governors
Primary VA / Foundation schools	3 headteachers, 2 governors
Secondary Community & VA schools	2 headteachers, 1 governor
Special Schools	1 headteacher, 1 governor
Academies and free schools	7 representatives – currently 5 secondary, 2 primary
Alternative Provision (PRUs)	1 headteacher
Non-school Post 16 provision (FE College)	1 principal
Unions	1 representative
Private early years providers	1 representative

Appointment of representatives

- Members are generally **elected** by the group they are representing.
- For headteachers this is usually done at one of their regular meetings.
- When there is a governor **vacancy**, the local authority contacts the chairs and headteachers of all eligible schools asking for nominations. In the event of more than one nomination an electronic vote is held.
- Members are appointed for a 3 year term.
- Members may appoint a substitute who can attend in their place if they cannot attend themselves.

What does it discuss?

The following are some of the topics which have been discussed at the Schools Forum in the last 12 months:

- **The Schools Budget** – i.e. the amounts planned to be delegated to schools or used centrally for educational purposes, and how to resolve budget pressures.
- **Budget monitoring** and the **use of any underspend**
- The school **funding formula** and **de-delegation** by maintained schools
- **High needs funding** processes, places and **top-up rates** in both mainstream and specialist provision
- **Funding for nursery education** for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.
- School revenue and capital **balances** carried forward at the end of the year
- **Funding for growing pupil numbers** and new schools
- Funding for **free schools and non-recouped academies**
- The **Pupil Premium**

Examples of Schools Forum powers

Issue	LA	Schools Forum	DfE
Changes to formula funding	Proposes, consults, decides	Consulted	N/A
Exclusions from the MFG	Proposes, consults	Consulted	Decides
Dedelegation	Proposes	Decides (maintained schools)	N/A
DSG contribution to central spend on EY, admissions, SEN Transport, Growth Fund	Proposes	Decides	N/A
Changes to the scheme of financial management	Proposes	Decides	N/A

Schools and their representatives

- Schools can expect to have their views **canvassed** and to receive **feedback** from their representatives, who have a responsibility to represent the **interests of their peer group** rather than the interests of their own individual school.
- Schools/governors should ensure that they are **aware** of business under discussion at Schools Forum and should provide **feedback** to their elected representatives to ensure that their views are considered when decisions affecting schools' finances are being made.

(from DfE guidance)

Responsibilities of Local Authorities

- Local authorities are required to **publish all papers** on a publicly-available website well in advance of the meeting. Papers should contain **clear recommendations** and the **responsible officers** should attend the meeting to provide further information and advice. Local authority officers should not dominate the meeting.
- All meetings of the Schools Forum must be **open to the public**. Observers do not have an automatic right to speak at the meetings, although the Chair may allow contributions if it seems appropriate.

Barnet Schools Forum meetings

- Barnet Schools Forum meets a minimum of **5 times** per year – once per half term except in the second half of the spring term.
- Dates of meetings, papers and minutes are published on the **council's website** and the meetings are open to the public, although only members and local authority officers presenting items for discussion can speak.

Further information

- Further information and **guidance on Schools Forums** can be found on the DfE's website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2013>

- The **agenda, papers and minutes** of Barnet Schools Forum meetings can be found on the council's web-site:

http://www.barnet.gov.uk/WorkingWithChildrenInBarnet/info/30020/schools_forum