



Report to: Schools Forum

Date: 22nd June 2022

Subject: Schools Forum Membership and Self Assessment

Report of: Colette Dutton - Director Children and Families

Contact officer: Mark Rotheram – Strategic Finance Manager
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Summary: To provide information on a recent review undertaken of Schools Forum membership and a self-assessment against regulations and good practice guidance.

Recommendation(s): For Schools Forum to review the information and agree remedial actions where necessary.

Implications:

*What are the **financial** implications?* n/a

*What are the **staffing** implications?* n/a

Risks: n/a

1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is good practice to periodically review Schools Forum membership, constitution and processes against relevant regulations and DfE guidance. LA officers recently met to review these areas.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide Forum members with information on the outcome of this review and self-assessment and to seek agreement on any remedial actions required.

2. Schools Forum Membership

- 2.1 The DfE's Schools Forum Operation and Good practice guide outlines the following in relation to Schools Forum membership:

'There is no maximum or minimum size of a schools forum. Authorities will wish to take various issues into account in deciding the actual size, including the need to have full representation for various types of school, and the local authority's policy on representation of non-schools members. However, care should be taken to keep the schools forum to a reasonable size to ensure that it does not become too unwieldy.'

And:

'Schools forums must have 'schools members', 'academies member(s)' if there is at least one academy in the local authority's area and 'non-schools members'. 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.'

- 2.2 **'Schools members'** include headteachers, headteachers representatives and governors. **'Non Schools members'** include representatives of 16-19 education providers, early years providers from the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, diocesan representation, trade unions and professional associations.
- 2.3 Based on current membership schools members amount to 14 representatives (78%) (including one vacancy), with non-schools members totalling 4 (22%) and therefore this meets the two thirds requirement for schools members.
- 2.4 The table below sets out the pupil numbers in the maintained and academy sectors together with representation on Schools Forum for these sectors. Where a member may represent two different sectors (e.g. a governor of two different schools), they have been included in both sectors. Special, Alternative Provision and Nursery school heads have been included against the relevant sector. It should be noted that forum also has a named Academy representative.

Table 1: Maintained and Academy Sectors

Sector	Number of Pupils	Percentage	Forum Reps	Percentage
Maintained	30,440	68%	10*	67%
Academy	14,564	<u>32%</u>	<u>5</u>	33%
Total	45,004			

* Includes vacant position previously occupied by a maintained school head.

The following table provides a similar comparison between secondary and primary school representation. Again where a member may represent both sectors they have been included against both.

Table 2: Primary and Secondary Sectors

Sector	Number of Pupils	Percentage	Forum Reps	Percentage
Primary	26,010	58%	8	62%
Secondary	18,994	<u>42%</u>	<u>5*</u>	38%
Total	45,004			

* Includes vacant position previously occupied by a secondary school head.

2.5 From the review of membership we are also satisfied that there are school and non-school members representing the interests of all necessary groups/categories of schools/education providers in the borough including:

- Special Schools
- Maintained Nursery Schools
- Alternative Provision Academy
- 16 to 19 education
- PVI early years providers.

2.6 In summary current membership meets the requirements for Schools Forums and adequately reflects the pupil numbers across each sector. There is, however, currently a vacancy (previously occupied by a maintained, secondary head) which has not yet been filled.

Recommendation – Seek to elect a further Secondary school representative

3. Schools Forum Self Assessment

3.1 A self assessment has been completed in consultation with governance and education colleagues. This benchmarks Schools' Forum's processes and procedures against best practice. The completed self-assessment is included at Appendix 1 of this report.

3.2 The completed self-assessment has identified the following areas for improvement:

Publication of papers – Good practice indicates that papers should be published as a single document for ease when users are downloading. Currently papers are published as separate agenda items.

Recommendation – Going forward papers are to be published as one single document.

Publication of draft minutes - Minutes are currently only published after they have been approved at the following meeting. Draft minutes should be published promptly after the meeting (within 2 to 3 weeks).

Recommendation – Review process for publication of draft minutes.

Schools Forum Constitution – The constitution was last updated in 2015/16. A copy is attached at appendix 2. Reviewing this in line with the self-assessment the following updates/revisions may need to be considered:

- Process for election – The constitution does not currently set out in detail the process for electing member. May wish to consider additional detail on the election process.
- Tenure – Constitution currently states that there are no restrictions on tenure. The good practice guidance suggests that we should agree terms of office in order to allow changes to forum representation at appropriate points in time to reflect any changes in proportions of pupil numbers (i.e. academy vs maintained representation).
- Non-attenders - The constitution does not currently include a process for dealing with repeat non-attenders.
- Timescales for review – The constitution does not currently include details on the frequency with which it will be reviewed.

Recommendation – Review and update constitution with latest version brought to the next meeting for approval. Views of forum members on the above are welcomed.

Training/Induction for new members – We do not currently have a formal induction/training programme for new members.

Recommendation – New members should be given the opportunity to have training sessions with finance/governance LA officers to help develop understanding and knowledge of roles and responsibilities of schools forum members

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider the information above and agree the recommendations made.
- 4.2 Members to provide view in respect of potential updates to the constitution with and updated version to be brought to the Autumn Term meeting for ratification.