

Wiltshire Council

Schools Forum

13 June 2019

Requirements and composition of local authorities' schools forums

We have recently had an email from Owen Jenkins, the Deputy Director of the Academies & Maintained Schools Directorate Funding Division of the Education and Skills Funding Agency who stated that:

“A recent scrutiny exercise of local authorities' schools forums' minutes has shown that some local authorities are not complying with the governing regulations or the schools forum good practice guide. This email aims to remind local authorities of the requirements they should follow with regards to their schools forums, as stated in the 'schools forum: operational and good practice guide':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2015>”

The email highlighted some key sections and our responses are shown below:

Paragraph 16

This paragraph states that 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.

The structure should be regularly reviewed. It's important that all members of the schools forum and those that have attended the meeting are clearly detailed in the meeting minutes to enable interested parties to ensure the forum is representative and quorate.

Response:

Wiltshire Schools Forum currently has 19 voting members which are made up of

- Six Headteacher representatives 'schools members' as follows - 1 secondary, 4 primary and 1 special school)
- Five Academy representatives 'academies members' as follows - (3 secondary, 1 primary and 1 special school)

- Four elected Governor representatives as follows - (1 secondary school, 2 primary schools and 1 special school)
- Two early years representatives and two other nominated service partner representatives – one from the Diocese and one teacher representative ‘non schools’ members’
- A number of observer representatives are also invited to attend and contribute to the Schools Forum meetings.

Proposals are in place to amend the membership to reflect the current breakdown of the total NOR in schools as at the October 2018 census. As well as representatives from the Maintained and Academy Special Schools, the split of mainstream representatives should be as detailed below to ensure a membership of 12 members to represent schools.

Pupil Numbers - October Census			
	Maintained	Academy	Total
Primary	24713	13523	38236
Secondary	2838	22052	24890
Total	27551	35575	63126
Representatives			
10 members r	Total	Maintained	Academy
Primary	6.06	3.91	2.14
Secondary	3.94	0.45	3.49
TOTAL	10.00	4.36	5.64
Rounded Version			
10 members r	Total	Maintained	Academy
Primary	6.00	4.00	2.00
Secondary	4.00	1.00	3.00
TOTAL	10.00	5.00	5.00

Paragraph 61

This paragraph states that schools forums are required to be open to the public and that papers, agendas and minutes must be publicly available well in advance of each meeting, at least a week in advance.

Response:

All Schools Forum meetings are open to the public and the meeting dates are published on the Council’s website up to a year in advance.

Agendas, reports and minutes are also published on the Council's website with agendas being published at least 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Agendas, reports and minutes are also circulated to all Wiltshire Schools via the internal "Right Choice for Schools" software.

Paragraph 78

This paragraph states that that the frequency and timing of schools forum meetings should be agreed in advance of each financial year or academic year, and that it's good practice to publish the dates of the meetings on the schools forum website.

Response:

All Schools Forum meeting dates are agreed for each financial year and published on the Council's website.

Paragraph 99

This paragraph states that notes or minutes of each schools forum meeting should be produced and published on the website as soon as possible after the meeting to enable members and others to see the outcome of any discussions and, or votes. It further advises that it is good practice to publicise the draft minutes no later than five days of the meeting. This is important so that interested parties, including representatives and the public, can view them and consult as necessary. They will not be able to do so if the minutes are not published until after they are agreed at the next meeting.

Response:

Minutes are produced and published on the Council's website after the meeting as soon as possible to enable members to see outcomes of discussions and, or votes, but this is not usually within five days of the meeting due to Officer constraints.

Minutes are also shared via the "Rightchoice for Schools" internal software.

Further information

You can find the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 at:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2261/pdfs/uksi_20122261_en.pdf

If you have any questions about the contents of this email, please contact us via our enquiry form:

<https://tinyurl.com/ESFAenquiries>

Yours sincerely

Owen Jenkins

Deputy Director

Academies & Maintained Schools Directorate

Funding Division
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Proposal

1. Schools Forum to note the content of this paper regarding membership and representation.
2. Schools Forum to address the composition of membership through their representative Primary & Secondary Forums ideally place for the next meeting on 10 October 2019.