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# Schools Forum

**A guide for schools and academies on its  
role and their responsibilities**

**June 2013**

## Introduction

1. The reform and simplification of local authority formulae has raised the profile of the work of Schools Forums. There is still widespread misunderstanding about the role of forums. The aim of this note is to give schools and academies a clear understanding of the role of their local Schools Forum and how to ensure the voice of the school is heard. This note applies to both academies and maintained schools.

## The role of Schools Forum

2. Schools Forum is made up of representatives from schools and academies, but with some representation from other non-school organisations, such as nursery and 14-19<sup>1</sup> education providers. The forum acts as a consultative body on some issues and a decision making body on others.
3. The forum acts in a consultative role for:
  - Changes to the local funding formula. (The local authority is responsible for the final decision, although in some cases it may delegate the decision-making power to the Schools Forum)
  - Proposed changes to the operation of the minimum funding guarantee
  - Changes to or new contracts affecting schools (e.g. school meals)
  - Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in pupil referral units and in early years provision
4. The forum is responsible for decisions on:
  - How much funding may be centrally retained within the Dedicated Schools Grant (e.g. for the Admissions Service, prudential borrowing costs, additional funding available 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 (e.g. for staff supply cover, insurance, behaviour support)
  - Changes to the scheme of financial management

## Schools' representation

5. Schools and academies 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

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<sup>1</sup> The requirement for a 14-19 representative will be replaced by a requirement for a Post-16 representative in the autumn of 2013

- Maintained special schools
  - Maintained pupil referral units
  - Academies and free schools
6. Middle schools do not form a category of schools in their own right and should be treated in accordance with their deemed status.
  7. Where there is at least one school in a particular category, there must be at least one representative for that group on the forum.
  8. Representatives should be elected by their peer group. In the case of maintained schools, representatives should be head teachers (or their representatives) or governors, elected by their appropriate phase. Academies members should be elected by the Academy Trusts in the local authority area.

## **Responsibilities of schools and their representatives**

9. 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.
10. When electing an individual to represent the interests of their respective group, schools should satisfy themselves that their chosen representative(s) is competent to act as their advocate.
11. School staff and 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

## **Responsibilities of Local Authorities**

12. 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.
13. 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.

## **Further information**

14. Further information on Schools Forums, including a simple table which shows the decision making responsibilities of the Schools Forum, can be found on our website [Schools forum guidance](#).



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