

# BRIEFING PAPER

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**SUBJECT:** SCHOOLS FORUMS OPERATIONAL AND GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE 2012  
**DATE:** 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2012  
**RECIPIENT:** SCHOOLS FORUM

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## THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

### SUMMARY:

- 1 The Department for Education (DfE) published its Schools Forums Operational and Good Practice Guide in September 2012. The main points for consideration are raised in this paper along with detail of the Schools Forum responsibilities 2013-14.

### BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

- 2 The DfE guide has been produced to provide members of Schools Forums, LA officers and elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of Schools Forums.
- 3 The new guide is organised into 4 sections:
  1. Schools Forum Regulations: Constitution and Procedural Issues
  2. Effective Schools Forums
  3. Induction and Training
  4. Further Information and Contact Details
- 4 **Section 1 - Schools Forum Regulations: Constitution and Procedural Issues**
  - (i) **Membership**

The is to be no maximum or minimum size of a Schools Forum, Schools and Academy members together must number at least two thirds of the total membership, the balance between primary, secondary and academies must be broadly proportionate to pupil numbers.

**Southampton - Schools and Academy members currently number three quarters of total membership.**
  - (ii) **Term of Office**

Term of office for each member should be stipulated at the time of appointment. Schools and Academies must be informed within a month of the appointment the details of any non-schools member. A secondary schools member must stand down if their school converts to an Academy.

**Southampton – members are appointed to the Forum for a period of one year, there is currently no limitation on the number of years that a member be appointed. We have not had any secondary schools convert to Academy so far who have representation on the Forum.**

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## (iii) **Schools Members**

The numbers of members in each group must be proportionate to the ratio of pupils registered at them, must have a representative from Special Schools and PRU if applicable. There must be at least one representative of head teachers and one representative of governors among the school members. - **Southampton - currently has representation from Special Schools but none from the PRU. We have 9 head teachers and 4 governors on the Forum.**

## (iv) **Election and nomination of schools members**

It is not appropriate for a single person to be elected to represent more than one group. Members should be elected according to a process set within each group ensuring all head teachers etc have the opportunity to stand or vote in such an election. Clerk to Schools Forum to make a record of the process by which the relevant schools within each group elect their members. In event of a tie between 2 or more candidates the LA must appoint a member instead.

**Southampton – the process of election takes place at head teacher conferences and the Clerk to Schools Forum is notified accordingly. Election and nomination of Academies members**

Academies members must be elected by the proprietor bodies of the Academies in the authority's area. Free Schools, Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges count as Academies for this purpose.

## (v) **Non-schools members**

May number no more than a third of Schools Forum's total membership. Must include one person to represent: 14-19 Partnership, early years providers for PVI sector. Where there are schools or Academies in the area with a different religious character, the appropriate faith group should be represented.

## (vi) **Restrictions on membership**

The LA cannot appoint: an elected member who is appointed to the executive, the Director of Children's Services or officer who does not directly provide education to children or officers who advise on funding for schools.

## (vi) **Procedures**

Each LA must have a written record of the composition of its Schools Forum. The Secretary of State can appoint a representative of the EFA to attend and speak at meetings as an observer.

A meeting is only quorate if 40% of the total membership is present, if not it cannot legally take decisions.

Schools Forum must decided on the length of the term of office of the chair.

The regulations provide that a Schools Forum may determine its own voting procedures and meetings should be held at least 4 times a year.

**Southampton – there is in place a Schools Forum Constitution which includes the terms of reference**

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(vii) **Public Access**

Schools Forums are required to be open to the public and papers/agendas must also be publicly available.

**Southampton - Papers are uploaded onto the SCC website in advance of each meeting, every meeting is made public.**

5 **Section 2 – Effective Schools Forums**

(i) The paper presented at schools forum in July 2012 covered the recommendations around effective forums.

(ii) **Administration of the business of School Forums**

It is usual for papers to be dispatched at least one week prior to the meeting and papers should be published on the LA's website at this time. A good clerk can provide invaluable support to the members of the Forum.

(iii) **Agenda Setting**

Frequency and timing of meetings should be agreed in advance of each financial or academic year.

Regulations state that the LA must consult the Schools Forum annually in connection with the following:

- Amendments to the school funding formula
- Arrangements for the education of pupils with SEN
- Arrangements for the use of the pupil referral units and the education of children not at school.
- Arrangements for early years provision

**Situations in which Schools Forums have decision-making powers:**

- De-delegation from mainstream school budgets
- Creation of a fund for significant pupil growth
- Funding for prescribed historic commitments
- Funding for central early years expenditure, which will include funding for checking eligibility for an early years place and/or free school meals
- Authorising a reduction in the schools budget in order to fund a deficit arising in central expenditure carry forward from previous funding period.

**RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

None

**OPTIONS and TIMESCALES:**

The Schools Forum's Terms of Reference states that the constitution, appointment of the Chair and review of members is considered on an annual basis at the first meeting of the academic year.

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## **Appendices/Supporting Information:**

App 1 DFE Schools Forums Operational and Good Practice Guide 2013-14

App 2 Schools Forum Responsibilities 2013-14

## **Further Information Available From:**

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