

Southwark's Schools Forum Review

Date: 13 June 2024	Item 7 Type of report: Item for noting and action
Author name and contact details:	Kate Bingham kate.bingham@southwark.gov.uk
Officer to present the report:	Kate Bingham Schools Finance Consultant

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report outlines the findings of Southwark Council's Schools Forum (schools forum) governance review and provides recommendations to enable essential governance arrangements to be put in place in order to ensure that the schools forum operates as a more effective decision making and consultative group, supporting the council in its statutory responsibilities in respect of allocating the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

1. Comment on the draft constitution, at **Appendix 1**, specifically noting the rationale for the following proposals, as set out in paragraph 16:
 - size of the forum
 - representative membership
 - lead member attendance
 - officers in attendance
 - election/nomination process for each constituent group
 - role of the clerk in facilitating/recording the election/nomination process
 - term of office.
2. Endorse the additional considerations recommended to improve the effectiveness of the schools forum, outlined at paragraphs 18 to 37, and acknowledge the potential for extra resource requirements to be met from the Central Schools Services Block, namely in respect of:
 - Training
 - forward plan, including number of meetings (including one face to face)
 - standardisation of reports and agenda
 - timetable
 - website content

- clerking service specification
3. Note the proposal to move the main discussion regarding Schools Block allocation forward to the first meeting of the academic year (September/October) to ensure sufficient time for wider consultation and consideration of disapplication requests, if required, as set out in paragraphs 38 to 49.
 4. Note the next steps, outlined in paragraph 50, including the proposal to adopt the new constitution at the first meeting of the 2024/25 academic year and the establishment of a subgroup of the schools forum to support the improvements recommended.
 5. Take action to seek feedback and comments on the draft Schools Forum Constitution from members' representative groups and respond to the LA by 12 July 2024.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. [The Schools Forums \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) govern the composition, constitution and procedures of schools forums which generally having a consultative role and limited decision making powers on local authority (LA) proposals.
7. The [Local Government Act 2000](#) restricts some decisions regarding the DSG to the LA itself (be it Cabinet, a member of Cabinet or an officer of the Council) and, consequently, the council cannot delegate its decision making powers to schools forum, for example, decisions on the funding formula.
8. However, in exercising those decision making powers the council must consult the schools forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions and it is a matter for the LA to decide on the level of detail needed to generate a sufficiently informed response from schools forum. The areas the LA must consult the schools forum are:
 - amendments to the school funding formula.
 - arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs, the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school (including the arrangements for the commissioning of sufficient places and for paying top-up funding).
 - arrangements for early years provision; and
 - administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the LA.
9. LAs also need to discuss with the schools forum any proposals that may require Secretary of State consideration, for example:
 - to vary the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)
 - move up to 0.5% from the schools block, where the schools forum do not agree, or move more than 0.5% from the schools block.

10. Schools forums have the power to make decisions in respect of:

- top slicing the Schools Block (before distribution to individual schools via the funding formula) for:
- Growth fund
- Falling rolls fund
- Transfer of up to 0.5% to other DSG blocks.
- de-delegating funding for prescribed services from mainstream maintained schools budgets (only mainstream maintained schools forum members can make this decision).
- agreeing centrally retained budgets for:
- LA statutory responsibilities; and
- early years expenditure.

11. A comprehensive review of the schools forum governance was undertaken with a view to:

- Increase the understanding of the schools forum's role and capacity to assist in making high quality decisions.
- Encourage active attendance and wide engagement of all sectors in discussion.
- Support effective structure of meetings, including feedback from established schools forum subgroups and voting; and
- Ensure proactive preparation of agenda and papers.

12. The basis for the review was the DfE's [Schools Forum operational and good practice guide](#) and, using the [self-assessment checklist](#) as a guide, views on the current operation of the schools forum were obtained from officers and schools forum members.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Constitution and procedural issues

13. There is a general view that the wider school community is not clear on what the schools forum is or what it does which, in turn, hinders the LA's ability to attract members to the schools forum.
14. The LA has not been proactive in establishing or promoting the role of the schools forum. There is no publicly accessible written constitution outlining the terms of reference, membership, or operating principles of the forum.
15. It is essential that a refreshed Constitution be adopted by the schools forum at the first meeting of the 2024/25 academic year. The constitution should specifically cover:

1. the terms of reference, outlining the statutory nature and specific role of the schools forum (as set out paragraph 5 to 9 above).
 2. the membership; and
 3. operating principles
16. A draft constitution is attached at **Appendix 1**, drawn from examples from other councils, which addresses many of the elements required to increase the understanding of the schools forum’s role and capacity to assist in making high quality decisions and encouraging active attendance and wide engagement of all sectors in discussion and the decision making process.
17. Specific regard to the following membership issues has informed the draft constitution:
- a. Size of the schools forum – the council’s schools forum currently consists of 19 positions (including six vacancies and one member not attending since September 2022), representing 18% as a proportion of Southwark schools. This is on the low side in comparison to other London boroughs, which have an average membership size of 21 or 28 (at an average of 27% of all schools), illustrated in **Table 1**. Any increase in the size of the schools forum would be reflected in an increase in school members (proportional to pupil numbers) and needs to be balanced against the ability to recruit additional members in the short term.

Table 1 – comparative size of schools forums

Council	Membership	Membership
	number	as % of schools
Southwark	19	18%
Lewisham	23	27%
Lambeth	22	24%
Westminster	17	30%
Croydon	24	19%
Greenwich	22	37%
Bromley	18	18%
Bexley	23	27%
Camden	20	35%
Islington	19	28%
Hackney	19	23%
Tower Hamlets	21	22%
Newham	27	26%
Kensington and Chelsea	16	40%

- b. Representative membership – currently the balance between maintained and academy members is skewed towards the maintained sector, despite almost 60% of Southwark pupils attending an academy. There is also only one diocese representative (CoE) which should be extended to include the Catholic diocese. **Table 2** illustrates the proposed representation if the total membership were to be increased to 20 (as an example) compared to the current representation.

Table 2 – Proposed representation

Constituent Group	Constitution	
	Current	Proposed
Maintained Nursery HT	1	1
Maintained Primary HT ^{Note 1}	4	3
Maintained Primary Governor ^{Note 2}	2	1
Maintained Secondary HT	1	1
Maintained Special HT	1	1
Pupil Referral Unit	1	1
Academy Primary HT	1	1
Academy Secondary HT	3	5
Special Academy HT	1	1
Diocese ^{Note 3}	1	2
Early Years - PVI	1	1
Trade Union (teachers)	1	1
Further Education - SEN	1	0
14-19 Rep	0	1
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	19	20
<i>Notes</i>		
1. Maintained Primary HT:		
Community	2	1
Church of England	1	1
Roman Catholic	1	1
2. Maintained Primary Governor:		
Community	1	1
VA	1	0
3. Diocese		
Southwark Diocesan Board of Education	1	1
Archdiocese of Southwark Schools' Commission		1

- c. Lead member attendance – the relevant council’s lead member cannot be a member of the schools forum but can attend the schools forum and can speak to the content of the reports presented in an advisory capacity only. At present, Southwark Council’s Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Refugees does not attend the forum and, if this is to continue, the LA must establish clear communication channels to ensure that the lead member is kept up to date on the business of the schools forum.
- d. Officers in attendance – at any one time, the number of LA officers attending the schools forum can be up to 11. The DfE guidance recommends a minimum of three officers attend: the Director of Children’s Services (or their representative); the Chief Finance Officer (or their representative) and a

technical advisor (usually the equivalent of the Schools' Finance Manager) with all three able to speak to the content of the reports presented in an advisory capacity only. This number can be supplemented by officers presenting papers or invited by the schools forum, whose participation in the schools forum's discussion is restricted to the paper presented or the reason for the invite.

- e. Election/nomination process – primary headteachers and one academy representative are clear about the nomination process but the rest of the members who responded to the self-assessment questionnaire were unsure. Anecdotal evidence suggests that governor representatives are sought via contact from governor services. Some LAs have formal and regular election processes established for their forum representatives to be chosen, however it must be recognised that the real issue is actually getting sufficient representation and consider whether a prescriptive process would resolve that issue. That said, it is important that the constitution record the process by which the constituents of each group elect or decide how their nominees are chosen and the LA may consider the role of the forum clerk in identifying and facilitating that process (whatever that is).
 - f. Term of office – comparative information from the other London boroughs indicates the standard term of office for schools forum members is between two and four years with the majority settling on a three year term which is proposed in the draft Constitution with no barrier to an extension provided the sitting members are nominated/elected by their constituent group.
 - g. Membership review – will become a standard agenda item and considered at each meeting, with an annual review conducted before the end of each academic year. It is also proposed that the vacant positions be posted on the dedicated Southwark Schools Forum webpage.
18. The operating principles enshrined in section 3 of the draft Constitution act to support the effective structure of meetings and to ensure the proactive preparation of agenda and papers. However, they do not guarantee the active attendance and wider engagement of all sectors in forum discussions. Additional considerations to enhance the forum's overall engagement and effectiveness are outlined below and all are broadly the responsibility of the LA, with the encouragement and support from the chair / co-chairs of the schools forum, to implement.

Additional considerations to enhance the schools forum's effectiveness

Training

19. Currently, there is no formal induction/training programme offered to schools forum members. The overwhelming response from current members is that some induction training would be helpful for everyone and more specific training as and when it's needed.

20. New (and existing) members should be given the opportunity to have training sessions with LA governance/finance officers to help develop understanding and knowledge of roles and responsibilities of schools forum members
21. There are a number of schools forum induction training presentations available online¹ and these can be used to develop a local training offer which could be delivered by the schools forum clerk (as part of refreshed service specification and appropriate resourcing), supported by finance colleagues for the technical aspects, including an annual update, of the DSG allocation.
22. New members could attend the full session with existing members joining for the DSG overview or just the annual update element to support their understanding of their consultative and decision making role. The School Funding report presented to the [Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission](#) (agenda item 6) in February 2024 could be used as a basis for the technical training and be made available on the forum's dedicated website as a reference document.

Facilitating engagement

23. The draft constitution includes clear service standards regarding setting the meeting cycle with an accompanying forward plan alongside the availability of forum papers, decision logs and draft minutes. All of these standards act to assist schools forum members in fulfilling their responsibilities to:
 - exercise their decision making powers and enter into constructive discussion on behalf of their representative group; and
 - inform their constituent groups of schools forum business, decisions and the results of any consultations carried out by the LA.
24. Southwark Council's schools forum is usually scheduled to meet up to six times a year but generally only meets four or five times with the June meeting more often than not cancelled due to a lack of business. Most other London authorities meet four times a year, in line with the respective Council's decision making process and mandatory submissions to the DfE. That is:
 - September/October – proposals for schools funding formula and consultation timetable, including discussion of potential Schools Block transfer
 - November/December – outcomes of consultation and proposals for other DSG blocks and major schools forum decision making meeting
 - January – final funding formula and allocation of other blocks before authority proforma tool (APT) submission
 - June – membership review, scheme for financing schools updates, discussion re upcoming year and contextual education policy context / announcements / updates.

¹ [Dudley MBC Schools Forum Training Sep 21](#) & [West Sussex Schools Forum Training Nov 23](#)

25. The current meeting cycle broadly conforms to the same timeframes with the exception of the more detailed discussions about the potential funding formula changes / other block distribution occurring late in the autumn term with key decisions required in January. This restricts schools forum members' ability to disseminate and discuss the impact of and gather views on those potential changes with their representative groups.
26. In addition, with no current forward plan (which also acts as draft agenda setting with the forum chair/s), members are unable to predict the level of involvement required which also hinders the successful recruitment of new forum members.
27. The inaugural and draft forward plan, attached at **Appendix 2**, outlines the annual business of the schools forum, and proposes four meetings per academic year with a meeting in March set but only going ahead, if required. The plan also moves the main discussion of the Schools Block proposals to the September/October meeting to provide sufficient time for statutory consultation on those changes.
28. Members also expressed a view that one meeting per year might be face to face, particularly the meeting where the most discussion is to take place and that may be the first meeting of the academic year which coincides with the election of the chair and vice chair.
29. The schools forum may wish to add to the forward plan by commissioning annual reports from services that benefit from schools block de-delegation to share the impact of that investment and inform constructive discussion and views on the continuation of that funding.
30. Standard agenda items, as set out in **Appendix 3**, would supplement the forward plan.
31. A draft timetable to facilitate the lead times for presentation at the scheduled schools forum meetings is attached at **Appendix 4**. It is also proposed that a standard report format be introduced, following the established Children and Adults' Services template format.
32. The LA will also add the schools forum forward plan to the agenda for the regular headteacher breakfast briefings and to governors' newsletters.
33. Enquires were made to explore the possibility of including the schools forum meeting in the Council's committee structure but as current membership does not include councillors, it is not possible. However, the meetings can be included in the Council's [Calendar of Meetings](#) with a link to the already established schools forum webpage.
34. Further, it is proposed to enhance the current [Southwark Schools Forum](#) webpage to include the information contained in **Appendix 5**.

Clerking

35. To support the effective structure and operation of schools forum meetings, good practice suggests that key tasks be carried out, the responsibility for which falls to the schools forum's clerk and should be included in a formal service

specification agreement, whether the clerking services are provided internally or by a third party.

36. Broadly, the clerk is responsible for managing the schools forum logistics, including the publication of papers and recording minutes, the decision and action log. The key tasks, outlined below, are probably above what is currently expected and there may be additional resources required (from the central schools services block) to ensure they are carried out routinely.

37. Essential tasks:

- manage schools forum logistics
- publish papers as a single document (assisting easy download)
- record minutes, decision log and maintain action log
- organise, operate, and record any voting activity of the schools forum in line with the provisions of its local constitution
- clear recording of votes where there are contrary views
- publish the decision log within three working days and draft minutes within 10 working days
- provide the route by which schools forum members can access further information and co-ordinate communication to schools forum members outside of the formal meeting cycle
- respond to any queries about the business of the schools forum from headteachers, governors and others who are not on the schools forum themselves
- be responsible for ensuring contact details of all members are up to date
- maintain the list of members on the schools forum and advise on membership issues in general
- assist with the co-ordination of nomination or election processes run by the constituent groups
- keep the schools forum website up to date, for example by posting latest minutes and papers
- drawing schools' attention to the fact that all its agendas minutes and papers are publicly available (including the publication of formula consultation documents)
- a brief email to all schools, early years providers and other stakeholders after each schools forum meeting informing them of the discussions and decisions with a link to the full papers and minutes for further information
- monitor, on a regular basis, the schools forum and general schools funding pages on the GOV.UK website; and arrange for the distribution of any relevant DfE information to schools forum members
- develop and deliver the annual forum training package.

38. The latter two tasks should be fully supported by LA finance colleagues.

Compliance with DSG allocation statutory framework

39. Whilst the schools forum has a statutory consultative and advisory role in respect of school funding, the responsibility for determining and approving the schools' funding formula rests with the LA itself (be it Cabinet, a member of Cabinet or an officer of the council). That is, the schools forum does not decide on the formula.
40. LAs must engage in open and transparent consultation about any proposed changes to their local funding formulae, including the principles adopted, any movement of funds between blocks and disapplication requests. It is a matter for the LA to decide on the level of detail needed to generate a sufficiently informed response from schools and the schools forum.
41. Political approval, in accordance with the council's constitution and schemes of delegation, should be gained before the APT deadline in January of each year.
42. Currently, Southwark consults the schools forum on proposed changes to the funding formula and transfer of funds between DSG blocks within a restricted timeframe between the December and January preceding each financial year – mainly due to the timing of DfE publication of final DSG allocations.
43. The draft forward plan proposes bringing forward initial discussions regarding the allocation of the Schools Block for the following financial year, including potential transfer of funds to other blocks, to the first meeting of the academic year (September/October). This would include consideration of the emerging shape of the mainstream funding formula, the growth fund and the falling rolls fund and an opportunity to outline the process for the next financial year's budget setting, including any necessary consultation with all schools within the DfE requirements.
44. In terms of the level of consultation required, as LA's funding formula move towards the National Funding Formula, Southwark has relied on consultation with the schools forum in respect of any changes to the Schools Block allocation and this would be considered adequate consultation unless there is significant changes to the formula factor amounts or a transfer above 0.5% of the School Block is requested. This scenario is unlikely in Southwark's case and therefore consultation at schools forum is at a sufficient level as long as the discussion happens early in the academic year and may be further facilitated by the suggestion that this meeting is held face to face.
45. London boroughs appear to be broadly moving in the same direction and, alongside early discussions with their schools forum members, in acknowledging an appropriate balance needs to be struck between the resources required to mount a full scale consultation for small changes in the formula are increasingly favouring schools forum consultation only (and ensuring political approval). In some instances, where more significant changes are proposed, LAs are relying on targeted consultation if factor changes affect specific schools (e.g., PFI).
46. Consequently, presenting funding formula proposals at the schools forum meeting held in September/October, would not only allow sufficient time for wider consultation (if required) but also give schools forum members additional time to

disseminate, discuss and gather views from their constituent groups on the emerging issues and potential changes to the Schools Block allocation.

47. The schools forum meeting held in November/December would then focus on reports on any consultation that has taken place and consequent recommendations about the formula, including MFG rate and any MFG or other exceptions to seek from the Secretary of State. The main outcome of this meeting would be to seek decisions from the schools forum on these items in order to recommend the funding formula for approval.
48. The steps the schools forum would need to consider to reach final recommendations about the use of the Schools Block are:
 - Should there be any transfers between the Schools Block and any other blocks?
 - What rate should the MFG be set at?
 - What funds are to be set aside for Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund?
 - Are there any decisions that need to be submitted to the Secretary of State for ratification by the end of November?
49. In addition, the schools forum must be consulted on
 - arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs, the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school (including the arrangements for the commissioning of sufficient places and for paying top-up funding).
 - arrangements for early years provision; and
 - administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the LA.
50. The January schools forum meeting would then focus on confirmation of how the formula agreed at the previous meeting would look with a final opportunity for schools forum to comment before submission of the APT.

Next steps

51. Th LA proposes the following timetable to ensure a new constitution is adopted to enable the recommended improvements to be made over the course of the 2024/25 academic year and, more specifically, to enshrine an enhanced consultation and decision making process prior to the submission of the 2025-26 APT in late January 2025.

Date	Action required	Responsible Body
13 June 2024	Consider, discuss and comment of the draft constitution and recommendations to improve schools forum governance	Schools Forum

14 June to 12 July 2024	Time for any additional comments from members and feedback from constituent groups Confirm election/nomination process for all representative groups	Schools Forum members Local Authority
September / October 2024	First meeting of the 2024/25 academic year – Southwark Council Offices, Tooley Street. Adopt constitution Convene and agree Terms of Reference for a new schools forum subgroup with LA and SF representatives to support the implementation of the improvement process	Local Authority Schools Forum Schools Forum
From September / October 2024	Confirm and engage additional members in line with the constitution.	Local Authority / Clerk
Throughout 2024/25 academic year	Report back to schools forum on progress	Schools Forum Governance Working Group

APPENDICES

1. Draft constitution
2. Forward plan
3. Standard agenda
4. Timetable
5. Website content

Appendix 1

Constitution 2024/25

The Schools Forum is a decision making and consultative body formed to advise Southwark Council, as the LA, on the operation of the local schools' budget, and its distribution among schools and other bodies as defined in the [School and Early Years Finance and Childcare \(Provision of Information About Young Children\) \(Amendment\) \(England\) Regulations](#).

The [Schools Forums \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) govern the composition, constitution, and procedures of schools forums.

This document is divided into three sections:

1. Terms of reference
2. Membership
3. Operating principles

Further information, including the [Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide](#) published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) can be found on their website.

Terms of reference

Statutory status

Southwark's Schools Forum was established under the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998, section 47A](#).

Annual decisions

The overarching areas on which the Schools Forum makes decisions on LA proposals are:

- de-delegation from mainstream maintained schools budgets for prescribed services to be provided centrally
- to create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the LA's duty for place planning and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
- to create a fund for falling rolls if a schools' surplus capacity is likely to be needed within the next three years to meet rising pupil numbers and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
- agreeing other centrally retained budgets, including for LA statutory responsibilities

- funding for central early years expenditure
- approval to move up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks

Annual consultation

The LA must consult the Schools Forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions, namely:

- amendments to the school funding formula
- arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for early years provision
- administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the LA
- tendering and award of contracts, and other contract matters, for supplies and services which is to be funded from the Schools Budget and is in excess of the Public Contracts Regulations procurement thresholds

Membership

Composition

The [Schools Forums \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) govern the composition, constitution and procedures of Schools' Forums. There is no statutory requirement for a minimum or maximum size of members. Southwark's Schools Forum shall in total comprise of 20 members being 15 school members (including academies) and 5 non-school members.

Membership is reviewed annually to ensure the mandatory membership elements are complied with and that mainstream schools (both maintained and academies) are proportionately represented on the Schools' Forum having regard to the total number of registered pupils, though there must be at least one representative for each type of school. The January census will be used to determine this representation.

There must also be at least one representative of head teachers and one representative of governors among the school members. Schools and academies members must number at least two-thirds of the total membership.

Elected members (Councillors) who hold an executive role in a LA (i.e. a Cabinet Member at Southwark Council) are prohibited from being a member of the Schools Forum. Officers employed by the LA who have a role in the strategic resource management of the authority are also prohibited from the membership of a Schools Forum.

DRAFT

Membership

School representatives

Nursery school (maintained)	1
Primary school (maintained):	
Community school Headteacher	1
Community school Governor	1
Voluntary Aided (RC and CoE)	2
Secondary school (maintained)	1
Special school (maintained)	1
Pupil Referral Unit	1
Academy:	
Primary school	1
Secondary school	5
Special school	1
	15

Non-school representatives

Early year providers (Private and voluntary institutions)	1
Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (Church of England)	1
Archdiocese of Southwark Schools' Commission (Roman Catholic)	1
16 to 19 year providers	1
Teachers Professional Associations	1
	5

Observers

ESFA representative	1
	1

In attendance

Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Refugees	(TBC) 1
Director of Children's Services (or their representative)	1
Chief Financial Officer (or their representative)	1
Senior Finance Manager (Education)	1
Any officer that is presenting a paper	
Clerk	1

Election of schools members (to be confirmed)

The maintained primary school head teacher representatives shall be elected or decided by/at XXX.

The maintained primary school governor representatives shall be elected or decided through nominations from and a vote by all governors in the relevant sector (TBC).

The maintained secondary school representative shall be decided by mutual agreement between the relevant schools (two schools).

Primary academy representation shall be elected / decided / invited by/at XXX.

Secondary academy representatives are decided by/at XXX.

The maintained special school representatives shall be decided by mutual agreement between the relevant schools.

Academy special school representation shall be decided by mutual agreement between the relevant schools (two schools).

The maintained nursery school representative shall be decided by mutual agreement between the relevant schools .

Representation from the early years private and voluntary institutions shall be elected / decided / invited by/at XXX.

The pupil referral unit representative shall be decided by the school (there is only one school).

The respective dioceses representatives will be nominated by their individual Diocese.

The Clerk of the Schools Forum must make a record of the process by which the constituents of each group elect or decide their nominees to the Schools Forum.

Any election scheme must take into account the following factors:

- The process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election.
- The timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing.
- The arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots.
- The arrangements for counting and publicising the results.
- Any arrangements for unusual circumstances, such as only one candidate standing in an election.
- Whether existing members can stand for re-election.

If an election does not take place by any date set by the LA or any such election results in a tie between two or more candidates, the LA will appoint the schools member.

Election of non-school members (to be confirmed)

The representative will be elected/decided by their group and the record of the appointment process will be held by the Clerk of the Schools Forum.

Participation of observers

Observers shall be invited to attend Schools Forum meetings. Observers may participate in the debate but will not have voting rights should any business of the Schools Forum require a vote.

Council officers and lead member

Officers and executive elected members may attend and speak at the Schools Forum meetings in an advisory capacity only. An officer that is attending the Schools Forum to present a paper may only be limited to the paper that they are presenting.

Terms of office

The term of office for members of the Schools Forum is three years. The same members can be reappointed providing they are re-elected/ nominated again by the group that they represent.

As well as the term of office coming to an end, a schools member ceases to be a member of the Schools Forum if he or she resigns from the Schools Forum or no longer occupies the office which he or she was nominated to represent. A successor will be elected/nominated from the constituent group of the outgoing member(s).

If a change in membership representation (e.g. due to proportionality) requires a reduction in members from a particular group, that group will mutually decide between them which member(s) will step down.

Review of the membership

Membership will be a standing item on the agenda for each meeting of the Forum, to review the current list of members which will include which group they represent and their term of office.

The proportionality of the membership will be reviewed annually (in June/July) so that elections, if required, can be held by the end of the summer term ready for the new academic year.

Operating principles

Meetings

There will be a minimum of four meetings per year with at least one meeting per term and two meetings in the autumn term to consider matters relating to the new financial year, with the first meeting of the new academic year being conducted face to face.

At least one spring term meeting must be held in sufficient time to agree the schools block funding allocation to ensure the completion and submission of the authority proforma tool (APT) within the ESFA's timetable.

For this to happen, at least 40% of the school members must be present at this meeting (see Quorum section below).

Administration

Meetings of the Schools Forum shall be convened by the LA, who will arrange the clerking and recording of meetings. The cycle of annual meetings are based on the academic year. All the meeting dates for the next academic year are set by the end of June every year.

The clerk will maintain a forward plan, in agreement with the chair, which will inform the draft agenda for each meeting. The final agenda, including papers, will be made available one week in advance of the meeting date.

Every effort will be made to publish the decision/action log within three working days of the meeting and draft minutes within 10 working days of the meeting.

Confidential reports

If an item of a confidential nature needs to be discussed, the same principles and practices that apply to confidential items at Southwark Council's Cabinet meetings for determining will be adopted, including the exclusion of members of the public that may be in attendance.

Election of chair and vice-chair

A chair and vice-chair shall be elected at the first meeting of the Schools Forum in the autumn term for a period of one year.

Urgent business

Whilst it is unlikely that urgent business will arise during the course of the academic year, if it does then the LA may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Schools Forum (if a quorum can be guaranteed). Alternatively, a decision will be secured via email.

The chair cannot take a decision on behalf of the Schools Forum but the LA may seek the chair's view on an urgent matter.

Quorum

The Schools Forum shall be quorate if at least 40% of the total membership is present (this excludes observers and vacancies). If the Schools Forum is not quorate the meeting can proceed and the members present can give advice to the LA, but the LA is not obliged to take that advice into consideration.

Decisions on the schools budgets **may not be taken** unless 40% of the school members are present.

Declaration of interest

Any member of the Schools Forum who has an interest in any proposal must declare the interest at the beginning of the relevant item. The member can explain any issues to the meeting and then must leave the meeting until the item has finished. The member cannot vote on that item.

Where it is clear that a decision in which a member has an interest is likely to arise at a particular meeting, the meeting concerned may invite a substitute member (with no interest to declare) in accordance with the constitution to attend the meeting in their place.

Voting

All members will have one vote and are entitled to vote on all matters put to a vote, subject to the following restrictions:

- de-delegation from mainstream maintained schools budgets is limited to the mainstream maintained school's members where separate approval will be required by primary and secondary phase members
- retention of funding for statutory duties relating to maintained schools only is limited to maintained primary, secondary, special and PRU members
- amendments to the school funding formula, for which the voting is restricted by the exclusion of non-schools members except for PVI representatives.

Substitute members can attend and vote at meetings of the forum on behalf of schools members, Academies members and non-schools members.

Where a member votes, the member must only cast one vote and each member's vote must have an equal weighting. The Chair will not have a casting vote.

In the event of a tie the proposal being voted on will be deemed not agreed and the LA can request the Secretary of State to adjudicate.

Responsibilities of school forum members

The Schools Forum will take decisions based on the information at its disposal reflecting their commitment to meeting the needs of Southwark's children and young people.

School Forum members will exercise their decision making powers and enter into constructive discussion on behalf of their representative group.

School Forum members will inform their constituent groups of Schools Forum business, decisions and the results of any consultations carried out by the LA.

Removal of members

Should a member for the Schools Forum not attend three meetings of the Schools Forum or be absent for a period of six months and no acceptable reason for absence

has been provided then the position shall be declared vacant and nominations should be sought for the position.

Subgroups

The Schools Forum may appoint, at any time, subgroups, in the form of sub committees, working groups or panels. These might have permanent status or be charged with carrying out a certain function. The Schools Forum may delegate any of its activities, but not decisions to such a subgroup.

All subgroups must have written terms of reference. The Schools Forum will agree these terms of reference annually.

The Schools Forum may decide on the membership of both permanent and ad hoc subgroups, which will consist of a minimum of three persons who need not be members of the Schools Forum.

Following a Schools Forum subgroup's meeting, the chair will make a report to the next Schools Forum meeting of the business, discussion, action(s) and recommendation(s) so a final response to the LA can be given / decision taken at a quorate meeting

The (draft) minutes and papers (excluding papers of a confidential nature) will also be made available to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Amendment of the constitution

With the exception of matters subject to legislative provision or approval by the LA, the Schools Forum may vary its constitution by a simple majority of members at a quorate meeting of the Schools Forum.

Public access and publicity

The Schools Forum is a public meeting, and the LA is responsible for publishing the Schools Forum papers, minutes and decisions promptly on the Council website and draw schools' attention to forthcoming Schools Forum meetings, agendas and the minutes of Schools Forum discussions

Appendix 2 - Forward Plan

Introduction

The forward plan sets out the timetable for essential approvals and reports that will be brought to the Schools Forum by officers throughout the following academic year, outside standard agenda items. Further reports will be added to the Schools Forum agenda as and when required.

The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed.

Forward Plan

Meeting	Reports
September/ October	Election of Chair and Vice Chair National Funding Formula updates Schools Block allocation proposals (for consultation) - including School Block transfer Other consultation proposals Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Monitoring Safety Valve Agreement Monitoring Agree Subgroup Terms of Reference / Membership Schools Internal Audit Summary Report
November/ December	National Funding Formula updates Schools Block allocation consultation response High Needs Block proposed allocation Early Years Block proposed allocation Central Schools Services Block and other central retentions proposed allocation DSG Monitoring
January (before APT is due)	DSG Settlement Schools Funding Formula – agreement (APT) DSG Budget setting for upcoming financial year DSG Monitoring Safety Valve Agreement Monitoring
March	TBC
June	DSG Outturn report School Balances Annual Adoption of Scheme for Financing Schools and School Financial Regulations (if no consultation required) Safety Valve Agreement Monitoring Schools Forum Constitution & Terms of Reference review (inc Sub committees and working groups) Schools Forum Forward Plan

Appendix 3 - Standard Agenda

Members are requested to attend a meeting held via Zoom

Date Time

Clerk: Sarah Cooper

Email: Sarah.Cooper@southwark.gov.uk

MEMBERSHIP

Schools Membership:	Organisation
Maintained Primary HT	
Janice Babb	Federation of St James the Great and St John's Catholic Primary Schools
Susannah Bellingham	Brunswick Park Primary School
Vacant	
Vacant	
Maintained Primary Governor	
Jane O'Brien	Heber Primary School
Vacant	
Maintained Nursery HT	
Helen Rowe	Dulwich Wood Nursery School
Maintained Special HT	
Heidi Tully	Tuke School
Early Years - PVI	
Nicola Howard	1st Place Children's and Parents Centre,
Academy Primary HT	
Vacant	
Academy Secondary HT	
Steve Morrison	Kingsdale Foundation School
Vacant	
James Wilson	Bacon's College
Special Academy HT	
Steph Lea	Spa Education Trust
Pupil Referral Unit	
Yomi Adewoye	SILS
Maintained Secondary HT	
Catherine May	St Saviour's and St Olave's School

Non Schools Membership:	Organisation
Further Education - SEN	
Vacant	
Diocese	
Pia Longman	Southwark Diocesan Board of Education
Trade Union (teachers)	
Betty Joseph	The Grange Primary School

AGENDA

All documents distributed in advance will be taken as read

Papers are also available at [Southwark Schools Forum](#)

Item	Details	Time
1.	Apologies for Absence, and to confirm quorum	5 minutes
2.	Declaration of interests – the Education (Schools Government) Regulations 1989 (as amended) oblige members with a pecuniary interest in a contract or other matter to disclose the fact, to withdraw from the meeting when it is being discussed and not vote on it	5 minutes
3.	Schools Forum Membership Update	5 minutes
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting	5 minutes
5.	Feedback from Subgroups (attach draft minutes and papers)	
6.	Reports	
7.	Updates from Director of Children's Services (or their nominated officer) - Verbal	5 minutes
8.	Forward Plan	5 minutes
9.	Dates of Future Meetings and Draft Agenda	5 minutes
10.	A.O.B.	5 minutes

Appendix 4 - Forward Plan Lead Time

	Agree draft agenda / confirm forward plan	Draft reports for Chairs	Chairs' Pre-Meet	Publish Papers	Schools Forum	Publish Decision log	Publish Draft Minutes
19-Sep-24	13-Jun-24	05-Sep-24	09-Sep-24	12-Sep-24	19-Sep-24	24-Sep-24	03-Oct-24
12-Dec-24	19-Sep-24	28-Nov-24	02-Dec-24	05-Dec-24	12-Dec-24	17-Dec-24	02-Jan-25
16-Jan-25	12-Dec-24	03-Jan-25	06-Jan-25	09-Jan-25	16-Jan-25	21-Jan-25	30-Jan-25
20-Mar-25	16-Jan-25	06-Mar-25	10-Mar-25	13-Mar-25	20-Mar-25	25-Mar-25	03-Apr-25
26-Jun-25	20-Mar-25	13-Jun-25	17-Jun-25	19-Jun-25	26-Jun-25	01-Jul-25	10-Jul-25

if required

Appendix 5 - Webpage

Constitution and terms of reference

The Southwark Schools Forum is a statutory body that advises the council on issues related to school budgets, such as formula funding, contracts and provision for the education of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

[*Link to constitution and terms of reference*](#)

Members

The Schools Forum's membership comprises representatives of the various sectors of the education community in Southwark such as nursery, primary and secondary schools, academies, primary school governors, unions and the Diocesan authorities. The 14-19 sector, early years providers, pupil referral units and staff are also represented on the Forum.

[*Link to membership details*](#)

Schools Forum meetings

Meetings normally take place at least four times a year. Below are the Schools Forum meeting dates for this academic year:

- 3 October 2024
- 12 December 2024
- 16 January 2025
- 12 June 2025

[*Link to forward plan*](#)

All meetings are scheduled to take place virtually. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings and if you would like to attend the upcoming Schools Forum as an observer please contact Sarah Cooper sarah.cooper@southwark.gov.uk.

The agenda and reports for each meeting will be displayed on this website at least one week in advance of the meeting date.

[*Link to meeting papers*](#)

Schools Forum vacancies

TBA

Further information

- [The Schools Forum \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [Schools forum: operational and good practice guide](#)
- [School and academy funding](#)
- [Southwark Scheme for Financing Schools July 2023](#) (PDF, 675kb)