SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION

Financial Year 2026-27

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Oldham Council

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Schools Forum Constitution

1 Principles

1.1 Whilst members are representatives of their specific sectors or phase, they must be able to consider the needs of the whole educational community, rather than using their position on the Schools Forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests.

1.2 Members must act in accordance with the Nolan Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

1.3 The organisation is known as the Oldham Schools Forum ("the Forum")

1.4 Where the Constitution does not specify a procedure, the Department for Education (DfE) Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide applies.

2. Terms of Reference

Role/Function

2.1 The Forum is not a Committee of the Council. It is a separate statutory body established by the Local Authority (LA) under the powers laid out in *The Schools Forum (England) Regulations* and brings together key partners in the provision of education at a local level, giving each an equal voice.

2.2 The role of the Forum is to:

- Act as a Strategic Partner as determined by the appropriate legislation.
- Be a formal channel of communication between the LA and schools as the principal mechanism for consultation concerning the funding of schools.
- Provide unambiguous professional advice and strategic direction to education decision-makers regarding the funding of schools.
- Agree recommendations which present the most equitable compromise between competing claims on limited resources through a transparent and properly informed process of discussion in a framework of agreed principles.
- Have strategic oversight of funding decisions which fall within the remit of the Forum affecting schools so that it can agree recommendations in the context of the full picture of funding
- Be involved in annual consultation in respect of the LA's functions relating to the schools' budget, funding relating to pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), the funding of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), funding for early years providers and revisions to the LA's scheme for the financing of schools.

2.3 The LA may also consult the Forum about any other matter relating to the funding of schools.

2.4 The LA must advise the Forum at the earliest opportunity of all local and national developments that impact on funding requirements for schools.

3. Powers and Responsibilities

3.1 Under Government regulation School Forums generally have a consultative role. Each Forum has decision making powers in a number of areas and must be consulted in other areas. The following table shows the relevant powers and responsibilities of the LA, the Forum and the Department for Education (DfE).

Activity	LA Role	Forum Role	DfE Role
1. Changes to funding formula:	Proposes and decides	Must be consulted [voting restrictions apply - see Annex 2] and informs the Governing Bodies of all consultations.	Checks for compliance with regulations
2. Movement of up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to other Blocks	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal
3. Contracts:	Proposes terms	Gives a view	Approval to Application for Exclusions
4. Financial issues relating to: • arrangements for 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. • use of pupil referral units and education of children other 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 • administration arrangements for the allocation of Government grants	Consults annually	Gives a view and informs the governing bodies of all consultations.	None
5. Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)	Proposes any exclusions from MFG for application to DfE	Gives a view	Approval to application for exclusions

6. De-delegation in relation to: • contingencies • free school meal administration • insurance • licenses and subscriptions • supply cover • support for minority ethnic pupils/ underachieving groups • behavior support services • library and museum services: • school improvement	Proposes	Maintained primary and secondary school member representatives decides for their phase on a line-by-line basis	Adjudicates if Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal
7. General Duties for maintained schools: • Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools (please see operational guide for more information	Proposes	Will be decided by the relevant maintained school members (primary, secondary, special and PRU)	Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal

8. Central spend on and the criteria for funding:
 	
• for significant pre-16 pupil growth, including new schools set up to meet Basic Need,
• falling rolls for surplus places
• central spend on:
  • admissions
  • servicing the Forum
  • equal pay back-pay
  • places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils
  • early years block provision
  • contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools
	Proposes	Decides for each line	Adjudicates if Schools Forum does not agree LA proposal

9. Central spend on: • licenses negotiated centrally by the Secretary of State • high needs block provision	Decides	None but good practice to inform Schools Forum	None
10. Scheme of Financial Management Changes	Proposes and consults the Governing Body and	Approves (school members only)	Adjudicates where Schools Forum does

	Head of every school		not agree LA proposal
11. Length of service of Forum members	Decides	None (but good practice suggests gives a view)	None
12. Voting Procedures at Forum	None	Determines	None
13. Appointment of Chair of Forum	Facilitates	Elects (may not be an officer or Elected Member of the Council)	None

4. Membership

4.1 The composition of the membership of the Forum is determined by the LA in accordance with The Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012. Details of the composition are set out in Annex 1 for information.

Members are required to report back to their respective sponsoring groups in sufficient detail to inform debate and opinion including those issues which have specific implications for academies and faith schools.

4.2 Observers, Advisers and Elected Members**.**

Forum meetings are required to be open to the public and agendas and minutes must be published in advance on the Council's website. Forum members may decide, if required, to exclude observers and members of the public for specific agenda items or, in exceptional circumstances, for whole meetings.

The LA and the Forum may invite observers who can be asked to withdraw for certain items at the discretion of the Chair.

The professional advisers to the Forum will be the Director of Education, Skills and Early Years and the Director of Finance and/or his/her representative(s) all of whom will be entitled to attend, and speak at all meetings of the Forum and any sub-committees which it convenes.

4.3 Declarations of Interest.

It is recognised that all Schools Group members will have an interest in at least one school. It is important that members should declare if the item under discussion could make a material difference to that school, or where they may have a personal or prejudicial interest. Notwithstanding this, a member may continue contributing to the discussion, but should not take any part in any decision made concerning that particular proposal which ***uniquely*** changes funding for their particular school/schools.

4.4 Members may formally nominate a named substitute to attend meetings in their absence, subject to the approval of the relevant body that elected them. Such substitutes must be from the same category of membership. Such substitutes have voting rights. It is the

responsibility of the member concerned to pass on a copy of meeting papers to any such substitute.

4.5 If a member fails to attend three consecutive meetings without giving their apologies or without their apologies being accepted, the Forum may decide they are deemed to have resigned, and the clerk should advise the LA so that they can seek nominations from the appropriate group or sub group for a replacement.

Note: For clarity, a member is deemed not to have attended a meeting even if a formally nominated substitute has attended.

4.6 Members of the Forum will be appointed for a four-year term of office, ending on the 31st August in their fourth year of appointment, subject to their remaining eligible. A member is, however, eligible for re-appointment and there is no limit to the number of terms an eligible member may serve. A member may resign at any time.

4.7 If a member ceases to be eligible to serve on the Forum he/she will be deemed to have resigned with immediate effect.

4.8 Only the Chair, or in their absence, the Vice Chair, may formally represent the Forum. Members may publicly disagree with Forum decisions but should ensure that their views do not create damage to the reputation of the Forum.

5. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

5.1 The Forum will elect the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Nominations shall be sought from the floor and approved by a simple majority of votes cast by individual members, as indicated by a secret ballot. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected for a two-year period (academic year) but will hold office until the first meeting of the Forum after the two year period has elapsed, at which time they will be eligible for re-election. A member may serve as Chair for a maximum of two consecutive terms. A Council Officer who is member of the Forum may not hold the office of Chair or Vice Chair.

5.2 The Chair (or the Vice-Chair in his/her absence) will be responsible for chairing and managing meetings of the Forum, in collaboration with the appropriate LA Officers and the Clerk.

5.3 If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, an acting Chair will be elected by the members present for that meeting.

5.4 The Chair and/or the Vice-Chair may be removed from office by a majority of votes cast by secret ballot. Any call for a ballot to remove the Chair and/or Vice-Chair must be made in writing, signed by at least 25% of the total voting membership and received by the Clerk at least 7 days in advance of the meeting at which the ballot would be taken. The clerk must advise the Chair and Vice Chair immediately any such motion is received.

6. Clerk

6.1 The LA shall nominate a Clerk for the Forum.

6.2 The Clerk will be responsible for:

- Arranging meetings of the Forum,

- Ensuring that members are notified of meetings and receive full agenda and supporting papers at the week before the meeting is due to take place.
- Recording the proceedings at meetings of the Forum,
- Ensuring that such a record is kept in a form that is easily accessible to others on request. Draft minutes should be sent to the Chair for approval within 8 working days of a meeting and distributed with the papers for the subsequent meeting.
- Publishing the draft minutes via email/ the website within one week of a meeting.
- Providing and seeking advice to the Forum and/or individual members and assisting the Chair/Vice-Chair with the management of meetings of the Forum.
- Ensuring that Governing Bodies and schools are informed of the outcome of the work of the Forum and consultation by the LA through the publication of minutes in the Schools' and Governors' bulletins along with posting of draft minutes, approved minutes, meeting agendas and associated meeting papers on the Schools' Forum page of the LA website.

6.3 In addition the Clerk to the Forum will (acting on behalf of the LA):

- Maintain an up to date list of members, nominated substitutes, and observers, detailing terms of office;
- Advise the Chair of the Forum and the LA and representative groups when vacancies occur.
- Facilitate or organise where appropriate for the vacancies to be filled, in accordance with the agreed procedure and will ensure that sufficient time is given to enable all constituency members have sufficient notice to be able to consider self nomination. It is unlikely that less than 10 normal school days would be sufficient.
- Notify changes to membership via the Schools' and Governors' bulletins.

7. Commissioning

7.1 LA Officers will be responsible for ensuring that all necessary papers for meetings of the Forum are supplied to the Clerk in accordance with section 5.2 in a timely fashion.

7.2 Where LA Officers are reliant on an external body (e.g., DfE) for receipt of information which may arrive too late for processing/distribution, papers may be e-mailed to members no less than 3 days before a meeting. Papers may only be tabled at a meeting to those members who do not have access to email.

8. Quorum

8.1 The quorum for meetings is 40% of the total voting membership (namely Schools Group and Non Schools Group) excluding any vacancies in those groups.

8.2 If a meeting is inquorate, it can proceed, but it cannot legally take decisions (e.g., election of a Chair or Vice-Chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations). An inquorate meeting can respond to authority consultations and give views to the authority.

9. Proceedings

9.1 Meetings of the Forum will normally be held a minimum of 4 times a year. The Chair must ask for declarations of interest at the beginning of every meeting. Additional meetings may be convened as and when required with the agreement of the Chair. A calendar of dates for meetings will be agreed at the first meeting in each school year.

9.2 Schools Forums can meet remotely. This includes (but is not limited to) telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming.

9.3 Where a decision needs to be made and there is general consensus, a formal vote will not be necessary. If the Chair determines a vote is necessary, voting will take place by a show of hands by members and decided by a simple majority. Where there is an equality of votes, the Chair has a second and casting vote.

9.4 In order to address specific issues, the Forum may, on occasion, need to establish working groups from within its membership group. Such working groups must appoint a Chair who will be directly responsible for ensuring that the business of the group is recorded, also for reporting to the outcomes of the work of the group to the Forum. The Forum may vote to accept a report from a working group.

9.5 Agenda items are selected by the Chair in consultation with the appropriate LA officers. Items of Any Other Business must be proposed to the Chair/Clerk before a meeting.

10. The Forum Budget

10.1 The budget for the Forum is £12,500.

10.2 The budget may be used for any legitimate purpose of the Forum

10.3 Before the start of each financial year (1st April to 31st March) the Forum shall determine its annual spending plan

10.4 The Director of Finance shall notify the Forum of any major variations in forecast expenditure compared to the annual spending plan.

10.5 The Director of Finance will account for the Forum's budget and make any payments authorised by the Forum.

10.6 The Forum shall not exceed its budget allocation calculated in 10.1 above. Any overspend will be a first charge on the next year's budget.

Annex 1

1. Membership

1.1 The Local Authority is responsible for setting up the Oldham Schools Forum, determining the numbers of members comprising of the Schools Group and Non-Schools Group and Observers, as laid out in the *Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012.*

1.2 Local Authority Officers in attendance have no voting rights. The Forum is required to have a representative of 16 -19 education provision and a representative from Early Years though the LA may appoint additional non-school members to represent other interests

1.3 The Forum consists of 21 members as set out below:

Primary Academy		
Principal (or representative) academy	5	Liz Travis - Headteacher at Holy Trinity Dobcross **(Chair)** Tracey Cavanagh - Headteacher at Holy Rosary Paul McGrath - Headteacher at St Thomas CE, Werneth Gary Needle - Headteacher at St Josephs Sharon Costello - CFO at the Harmony Trust
Primary Maintained		
Headteacher (or representative) Maintained	3	Helen Woodward - Headteacher at St Martins Nicola Edwards - Headteacher at Beever Vacant
Governor	1	Vacant
Secondary Academy		
Principal / CEO (or representative) - academies	5	Karl Newell - CEO & Executive Headteacher at Crompton House Gemma Cottingham, Headteacher at Royton & Crompton Stewart Ash - CFO at Pinnacle Learning Trust **(Vice Chair)** James Bell - CFO at Cramner Education Trust Joe Brownridge - Director of Academies Finance at E-Act Trust
Governor- Academy	1	Chris Gloster - Chair of Governors at Crompton House
Secondary Maintained		
There are no maintained secondary schools in Oldham	0	
Special Schools		
CEO (or representative)	1	Clare John - CEO at the New Bridge Group
Governor	1	Jeremy Sutcliffe - Chair of Governors at Kingfisher Learning Trust
Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)		
Headteacher or representative)	1	Emmet Patel - Headteacher at Kingsland School
Non-School Members		
Trade Unions	1	Nigel Yeo
Early Years (PVI)	1	Katie Anais Hoggard - Channings Childcare
16-19 Provider	1	Vacant
Voting Members	**21**	

2. Election and Nomination of Members and Chair

2.1 Governors

Nominations for Governor representatives will be sought from School Governing bodies with all eligible members being given an opportunity to be elected. Schools may nominate their governors' representatives to the Governors Section of the LA. If there are more nominations than places, then Oldham Governors Service will arrange for the governing bodies to vote for their representative. Governors represent school members and non-school members.

3 School Members

3.1 Headteachers

Headteacher representatives are directly accountable to their steering groups, which are the bodies responsible for headteacher elections.

- Primary Headteachers represent Primary schools and should reflect each of the Primary phases as far as is possible
- Secondary Headteachers represent Secondary schools and should reflect each of the 11 to 16 and 11 to 18 phases
- The Special Headteacher represents all phases of Special schools.

4. Non-school Members

4.1 Non-school members of the Schools Forum shall be nominated by Oldham's Children's Services, and shall include:

- *A provider from the 16-19 sector* – This includes those in the FE sector (FE and sixth form colleges) and other institutions that specialise in special education needs (SEN) and learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) provision (ISPs), where 20% or more of their students reside in the local authority's area.
- One trade union representative
- A representative from Oldham's Private, Voluntary and Independent providers of free entitlement nursery education (PVI)

Annex 2

Voting Procedures

The regulations provide that a Schools Forum may determine its own voting procedures save that on voting on:

- The funding formula is limited to school members, academies members and PVI representatives
- De-delegation will be limited to the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained school members

The other areas on which Schools Forum make decisions on local authority proposals are:

- De-delegation from mainstream schools budgets (where applicable, separate approval will be required by the primary and secondary maintained phase members of schools forum), for prescribed services to be provided centrally.
- To create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the local authority's duty for place planning (basic need), including pre-opening and diseconomy of scale costs, and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund.
- To create a fund for falling rolls for good or outstanding schools if the 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.
- Continued funding at existing levels for prescribed historic commitments where the effect of delegating this funding would be destabilising.
- Funding for the local authority in order to meet prescribed statutory duties placed upon it. Approval is required to confirm the amounts for each duty and no new commitments or increases in expenditure from 2013/14 are permitted unless agreed by the Secretary of State.

In each of these cases, the Local Authority can appeal to the Secretary of State if the Schools Forum rejects its proposal.