

Report to:	Schools Forum
Date of meeting:	15th Sept 2023
Report By:	Alison Jeffery
Title:	Schools Forum Membership
Purpose:	To review the East Sussex Schools' Forum Membership

Recommendations:

1. To consider and agree the proposed Schools' Forum membership changes

1. Background

- 1.1 The membership of the Schools' Forum is reviewed regularly to ensure that there is proportionate representation of each phase in maintained schools and academies in line with the number of pupils in each category.
- 1.2 The latest review, which uses the October 2022 census data, has shown that the required membership is in line with the current membership profile in relation to the split between the Primary and Secondary Phases. However, since the last review, with some schools becoming academies, a small change is required to the current representation within the maintained Schools (Primary Phase). The outcome of this is that the number of representatives, for maintained schools, would reduce by 1 member.
- 1.3 Alongside ensuring that there is a representative allocation of places to the Forum, it is also essential that we secure members to fill these; this is something that we have struggled to do over the last year. There are currently 24 "posts" allocated to the East Sussex Schools' Forum. Of these, there are currently 9 vacancies, some of which have been vacant for some considerable time. A list of current members, and potential vacancies, are attached (Appendix B).
- 1.4 Although, historically, membership of Schools' Forum has predominantly been headteachers, the DfE's 'Schools' Forum operational and good practice' document (Appendix A) states that representatives, for maintained schools, do not have to be Headteachers. We feel, therefore, that there is an opportunity to broaden the professional representation of the forum to include senior school staff whose role links to work that the Forum oversees (for example SENCOs and School Business Managers). Furthermore, the guidance also states that there is no minimum or maximum number of members, so it is proposed that this is another area that could be reviewed.
- 1.5 Academy members do not have to be split into Primary and Secondary sub-groups and, in line with the maintained school sector, do not have to be represented by Head Teachers.
- 1.6 Historically, it has proved very challenging to generate interest in becoming a Schools' Forum representative, and more recently this has included the appointment of a Chair and Vice Chair. Therefore, as representatives of Schools' Forum, collective

consideration needs to be given as to how new members can be attracted and what additional support should be provided to achieve this aim.

2. Membership Proposals

- 2.1 The proposal is to reduce the overall membership number from 24 to 20. This will still maintain the required School Members proportion, which has to be at least 2/3rds of overall membership.
- 2.2 To seek membership of Schools' Forum from the wider school community (as indicated in paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5). This would enable the Forum to maintain a good cross-representation whilst also opening up the opportunity for senior school staff whose roles are linked to decisions made at the Forum.
- 2.3 To review the training offer to new members to ensure that it meets the needs of members and promotes broader representation.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Schools Forum are asked to consider and agree the proposed changes to Schools Forum membership.

Alison Jeffery

Director Children's Services

Contact Officer Ed Beale

Tel No. 01273 337984

Email: Edward.beale@eastsussex.gov.uk