



Schools Forums

The Education Act 2002 made it a legislative requirement for all LEAs to set up a Schools Forum. The purpose of a Schools Forum is to give schools greater involvement in the way the funding for schools in the authority is distributed. They also have a consultative and advisory role on key aspects of strategy and budget such as:

- Contracts - how schools' contracts are awarded and managed;
- SEN - resourcing and meeting the needs of pupils with SEN;
- Cost pressures faced by schools such as national pay agreements and local recruitment issues.

In April 2006 the arrangements for school funding changed and the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG) came into force. Each LEA will have its own formula as to how the DSG is allocated, and any changes to this formula plus any additional specific funding must be approved by the Schools Forum. Previously such proposals had to be approved by the Secretary of State.

A Schools Forum is typically comprised of head teachers and governors, both secondary and primary, and representatives of other local bodies such as the Racial Equality Council, a professional teaching association and the Diocesan Board of Education.

Many Schools Forums publish their membership details and minutes of their meetings online. Meetings tend to be held once a term and are open to the public.

Schools Forums can only exercise their powers in relation to proposals put forward by their LEA. They do not have the power to initiate proposals.

Comment: The new School Admissions Code of Practice (2007) states that Local Authorities '*must invite a Service representative or representatives of other Crown servants (e.g. GCHQ personnel) to join the Admission Forum where there are significant concentrations of such personnel in an area*' (para 3.23(c)). A quick trawl through the membership of Schools Forums in possible areas did not reveal any Service representation; however it is possibly a little too early for this to have come into effect and have filtered through to the websites. While it will be interesting to see how this develops and what benefits it brings to Army communities, it must also be remembered that Schools Forums are unable to initiate proposals (see final paragraph above) and can only respond to those put forward by the LEAs themselves.