



Title of report: Annual Review of Schools Forum Membership

Meeting: Herefordshire Schools Forum

Meeting date: Friday 10 July 2026

Report by: Democratic Services Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To report on the annual review of membership of Herefordshire Schools Forum (the forum) and Budget Working Group (the working group) and to approve action as necessary to maintain proportionality.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The outcome of the annual review of proportionality is noted;
- b) 1 seat be transferred from Academies to Maintained Secondary Schools to ensure proportionality on the forum,
- c) 1 seat be transferred from Academies to Maintained Secondary Schools to ensure proportionality on the Working Group.

Alternative options

- 1. The forum could choose to disregard proportionality in respect of the forum and the working group. This option is not recommended as it is preferable for the effective functioning of both groups that the different types of schools in Herefordshire are fairly represented.

Key considerations

- 2. The composition of the forum is reviewed annually to ensure that Local Authority maintained schools and academies are represented proportionately on the forum, based on the number of pupils registered in each category of school, and that the membership complies with regulations.

3. In July 2024, the Herefordshire school's forum agreed to remove a seat for Maintained Primary Schools taking the composition of members of the forum down to 25. This was due to the number of vacancies and lack of appetite to fill the spaces.
4. Herefordshire school's forum is composed of 25 seats allocated between schools' members, academies members and non-school members. Schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the schools forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category. The membership of the forum is reviewed annually to ensure the allocation of seats remains proportionate.
5. Herefordshire allocates 18 seats between the schools and academies members. One seat each is allocated to mainstream special schools, academy special schools, and the Pupil Referral Unit management committee. The 15 remaining seats are allocated to mainstream schools and academies, divided proportionally. The annual review has been carried out for 2026, and the results are set out below.
6. Regulations make no distinction between primary phase and secondary phase academies. Guidance states that Free Schools are to be classed as academies for the purpose of this exercise. The calculations of proportionality set out below are based on pupil numbers taken from the January 2026 school census and translate these proportions into numbers of seats on the forum, rounded, as necessary.
7. Total pupil population in mainstream schools was 20,477 broken down as follows:

School category	Number of pupils	Proportion	Proposed number of seats (rounded)	Current number of seats
Maintained Primary	7,163	35.0%	5	5
Maintained Secondary	3,313	16.2%	3	2
Academies	10,001	48.8%	7	8
Total			15	15

8. Based on this assessment, it is proposed that a seat is transferred from the allocation of seats for Academies to Maintained Secondary Schools to ensure representation is proportionate on the Schools Forum.

Membership of Budget Working Group

9. The Working Group is a permanent advisory sub-group of the forum. Regulations prescribe how the forum itself is to be constituted but these provisions do not apply to the composition of sub-groups. The composition of the Working Group is therefore a matter for the forum itself. It is open to the forum to agree to disregard proportionality for the working group, amend the number of seats or set minimum representation for particular groups.
10. The forum agreed in October 2012 that the Budget Working Group would consist of 14 members. Two seats were allocated to early year's settings and one to special schools. The remaining 11 places available to primary schools, secondary schools and academies, were to be allocated on a broadly proportionate basis based on pupil numbers in each category. The forum also agreed that there should be a minimum of one maintained school representative from the secondary sector and one academy representative from the primary school sector.
11. Total pupil population in mainstream schools was 20,477 broken down as follows:

School category	Number of pupils	Proportion	Proposed number of seats (rounded)	Current number of seats
Maintained Primary	7,163	35.0%	4	4
Maintained Secondary	3,313	16.2%	2	1
Academies	10,001	48.8%	5	6
Total			11	11

12. Based on this assessment, it is proposed that a seat be removed from Academies and added to Maintained Secondary Schools to ensure representation is proportionate on the Budget Working Group.

Community impact

13. The items considered and decisions made by the forum should have regard to what matters to schools and settings in Herefordshire and how the forum can best contribute to managing the current changing and challenging financial circumstances.
14. The constitution ensures that the membership of the schools forum continues to reflect the range of types of school and setting across Herefordshire and that all groups have the opportunity to shape the decisions of the forum.
15. The amendments to the constitution as a result of the new regulations ensure that the work of the forum can continue and that all interested parties are able to observe the meetings of the forum.

Environmental Impact

16. Whilst this review will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

17. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. In relation to schools finance it is the responsibility of individual governing bodies to commit expenditure according to the individual pupil need. However, the decisions of the schools forum should have regard to this duty and the potential implications of any decisions made.
18. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision and it has been found to have no impact for equality

Resource implications

19. A budget of £19k has been allocated for administering the schools forum and associated activities for the 2026/27 financial year. This is funded from the dedicated schools grant received from central government.

Legal implications

20. The schools forum is established under section 47A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The current regulations pertaining to the operation and management of schools forums are set out in The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.
21. The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) sets out guidance on the operation of schools forums, with the most recent version published in March 2021. This document also gives examples of good practice which the ESFA have drawn from a number of schools forums and the Department for Education. It is not designed to be prescriptive except where it refers directly to the Schools Forum Regulations 2012.
22. The council must ensure that the schools forum for their area is constituted in accordance with the regulations and is responsible for determining the size and composition of the forum, and the members' terms of office.

Risk management

23. There are no identified risks associated with approval of the recommendations contained in this report. If the membership of the forum and working group is not proportional, there is a risk some categories of schools could feel that they are not fairly represented and object to decisions taken by the forum.

Consultees

24. The Working Group were consulted on the proposed changes on 30 June 2026.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None