

Central Bedfordshire School Forum

Over the last 6 months I have been looking at ways in which other School Forums operate to see what we might be able to do to enhance the effectiveness of the Central Bedfordshire School Forum. In February I made two presentations to Headteachers and Chairs of Governors about the role of the School Forum. I invited comments about how we might be able to better represent our sectors, how we might widen our agenda setting process and on how we should best communicate the work of the Forum to the widest audience.

Proposal

The School Forum should discuss the items listed below to decide if we wish to make changes to the way in which we work.

Possible improvements to enhance the effectiveness of the Central Bedfordshire School Forum from looking at the practice of other School Forums.

- Increase the number of meetings that the Forum holds. Three other Local authorities we have spoken to have 5 or 6 meetings per year but with shorter agendas
- Hold the meetings in business hours
- Hold a pre meeting (before the School Forum meeting starts) with Officers available to answer queries from members about the papers to be tabled at the meeting. In this way any technical issues can be resolved leaving the maximum amount of time to discuss the agenda item recommendation rather than spending time understanding the detail behind it.
- Use some of the School Forum budget to employ an administrator who is responsible servicing the Forum
- Hold a pre meeting with the Chair and Officers well before the meeting takes place to agree the agenda and to produce a summary paper of all the agenda items. Circulate the summary paper widely to invite any responses well in advance of the meeting. Publish the detailed papers on an easily accessible part of the website

Feedback from Central Bedfordshire Heads and Chairs of Governors.

At the recent LA briefings for Headteachers and Chairs of Governors I made a short presentation explaining the role of the School Forum. During the presentation I asked for feedback on two key questions. The responses were as follows.

Representation – How do we ensure that members represent their sectors effectively?

- Should membership be drawn from across the Learning Communities?
- Inform schools of who is the representative for their sector and provide contact details of that person so communication is easy
- Ensure cluster representation
- Find ways to improve the knowledge base of Governors, Heads etc about what the Forum does.
- Remind representatives of their role and establish the best way of communicating with their sector.

Communication – How can we gather views and disseminate information effectively?

- Appoint an Admin person who has a role to support the forum and to facilitate communication with schools and governors.
- Ensure that the School Forum section on the website is easily found and contains the minutes and agendas of meetings. The membership list should also be published.
- Could there be an enquiry form on the website that could be used to raise agenda items?
- Local meetings of pyramids, clusters, Learning Communities etc should have School Forum on their agenda.
- Minutes should be sent to each school along with the draft agenda for future meetings.
- Can Central Essentials be emailed directly to Chairs? It could contain School Forum information?
- Can we submit a brief summary of the papers a month in advance of the meeting to ensure we have time to communicate as widely as possible?

Other

- Would it help to have meetings in working hours?
- How often are representatives contacted by schools to raise issues?