
Heads' Funding Group: Terms of Reference

Report being considered by: Schools' Forum
Date of Meeting: 1st December 2025
Report Author: Neil Goddard and Jessica Bailiss
Item for: Decision **By:** All Forum Members

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek Schools' Forum approval for the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Heads' Funding Group (HFG).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Schools' Forum approves the revised ToR for the HFG as set out in Appendix A to this report.

Is the Schools' Forum required to make a decision as part of this report or subsequent versions due to be considered later in the meeting cycle?	
Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>

3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Equalities Impact:	Positive	No Impact	Negative	Commentary
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Data Impact:		x		

4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 The revised ToR for the HFG in Appendix A, have been developed following a governance review by the Schools' Forum Task and Finish Group and subsequent recommendations agreed by the Schools' Forum in October. The review sought to clarify the role and remit of the HFG and improve the group's effectiveness and transparency by formalising its status as a sub-group of the Forum and ensuring meetings are scheduled earlier in the cycle to provide timely input. The revised ToR reflect these agreed changes.

Issue Identification

- 4.2 The governance review identified that the HFG's current arrangements limited effectiveness and transparency, requiring formalisation and clearer scheduling.

Consultation and Engagement

- 4.3 The revised ToR were developed following the governance review by the Task and Finish Group and the recommendations agreed by the Schools' Forum in October. They were subsequently discussed by the HFG at its meeting on 18th November.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- 4.4 The Terms of Reference will be kept under review and can be amended at any time if required.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Approval of the revised Terms of Reference will formalise the agreed governance improvements, ensuring the HFG operates effectively as a transparent and influential sub-group of the Schools' Forum.

6. View from the Heads' Funding Group

- 6.1 The draft ToR were presented to the HFG at its meeting on 18th November and the group was happy with the proposed changes and that they accurately reflect the recommendations agreed by the Schools' Forum in October.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – HFG ToR
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Appendix A

Heads' Funding Group (HFG) Terms of Reference Updated December 2025

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Heads Funding Group (HFG) is a formal sub-group of the Schools' Forum. Its purpose is to provide strategic input and recommendations on matters relating to school funding, in advance of Schools' Forum meetings.
- 1.2 The HFG shall meet prior to Forum meetings, in accordance with a schedule agreed annually, to ensure timely and effective contribution to the decision-making process.
- 1.3 The HFG provides advice and recommendations on matters within the remit of the Schools' Forum, as defined in Section A of the Schools' Forum Constitution, relating to annual decisions and consultations.

2. Meeting Governance and Administration

- 2.1. The HFG does not hold formal decision-making powers. Where appropriate, the group may take indicative votes to agree a preferred recommendation for submission to the Schools' Forum.
- 2.2. The HFG will be chaired by the Service Director for Education and SEND and supported by the Finance Manager – Schools
- 2.3. HFG meetings should take place prior to Schools' Forum meetings to enable the group to provide timely and influential input on matters being reported to the Forum (Schedule to be agreed).
- 2.4. Minutes will record action points and recommendations only and will be shared with the Schools' Forum to support transparency.

3. Membership

- 3.1. Membership will be cross phase and is open to all headteachers (and school business managers) who are members of the Schools' Forum (SF membership is reviewed annually to ensure it meets the regulations).
- 3.2. Members represent all schools in their phase.
- 3.3. Maximum membership will be as follows:

Membership Group	Total
Maintained Primaries	5
Maintained Secondaries	3
Academies	5 (including special academy)
Maintained Special	1
Maintained Nursery	1
Maintained PRU	1
TOTAL	16

4. Absence

- 4.1. Where a headteacher is unable to attend a HFG meeting they should send apologies for absence and organise for a substitute head to attend from the same membership group.
- 4.2. Comments and questions in writing will not be accepted. If the head has matters they particularly wish to raise they should inform their substitute/ other heads in their membership group.

5. Functions

- 5.1. The group will operate in the context of national funding changes, such as reduced flexibility, the introduction of a national formula and significant initiatives e.g. SEND reforms. This will involve an analysis of impact and making recommendations to the SF.
 - 5.2. The HFG will make recommendations to the SF about the funding formula and deployment of any additional funding, 'headroom', under -spend or overspend.
 - 5.3. The HFG will review annual benchmarking data such as the local AWPU rate, comparing West Berkshire's position with the national average and statistical neighbours.
 - 5.4. The group will carry out impact scrutiny reviews of DSG funded provisions e.g. various areas of expenditure in the High Needs Block.
 - 5.5. The HFG will deliver a planned programme of work to support the SF through its annual cycle of decision making.
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