



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Schools Forum

Survey on future meeting arrangements

Summary of responses

18 October 2023



Background

- Schools Forum members requested in July 2023 that members be surveyed about meeting arrangements and issues that could affect attendance.
- Members were surveyed in September using the Microsoft Forms online tool.
- Responses were received from 13 Schools Forum members:
 - 3/3 maintained primary school representatives
 - 1/1 maintained nursery school representative
 - 3/5 academy mainstream representatives
 - 1/1 academy special school representative
 - 1/1 academy alternative provision representative
 - 2/2 PVI representatives (plus 1 substitute)
 - 1/1 CofE diocesan authority representative

Responses – barriers to attendance






If you find it difficult to attend Schools Forum meetings, what are the reasons for this?

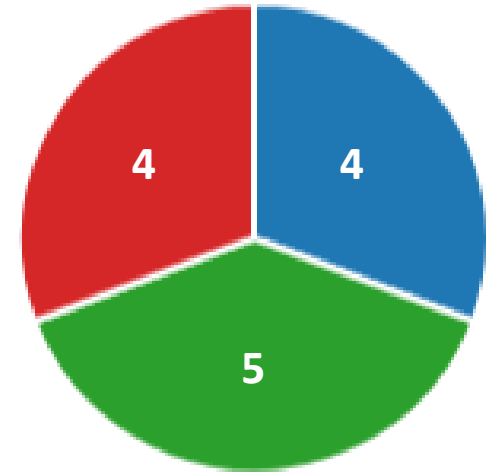
Comments:

- Distance from school
- The meetings are nearly all on Tuesdays and this is not my working day
- Other commitments as a headteacher
- Only health issues
- Tuesday afternoon meetings clash with regular meetings in school
- Sometimes time and getting away from school
- Location and time of day
- Sometimes due to inspections
- Diary clashes occasionally
- Location, schedule pressures

Responses – meeting format

What sort of meeting would you prefer?

 In-person	4
 Online	0
 Hybrid – both online and in-person	5
 Combination – e.g. most meetings online with key meetings in-person	4
 No preference	0







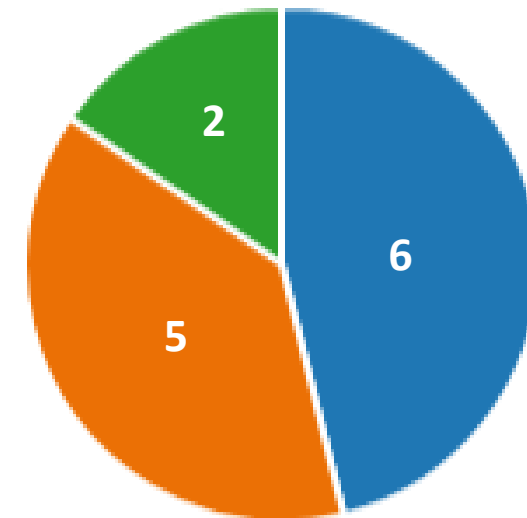
Additional comments:

- In person meetings are more effective and productive though taking time out of school is not always easy, particularly if you also teach. Online meetings may capture more people and avoid lots of apologies.
- I prefer in-person but there are times when I may only be able to attend online
- Environmental aspect and time out of the day makes hybrid working a necessity.
- Really the answer is a combination of 3 and 4 – most online with key meetings in person (where possible).

Responses – meeting location

Where would you prefer any in-person meetings to be held?

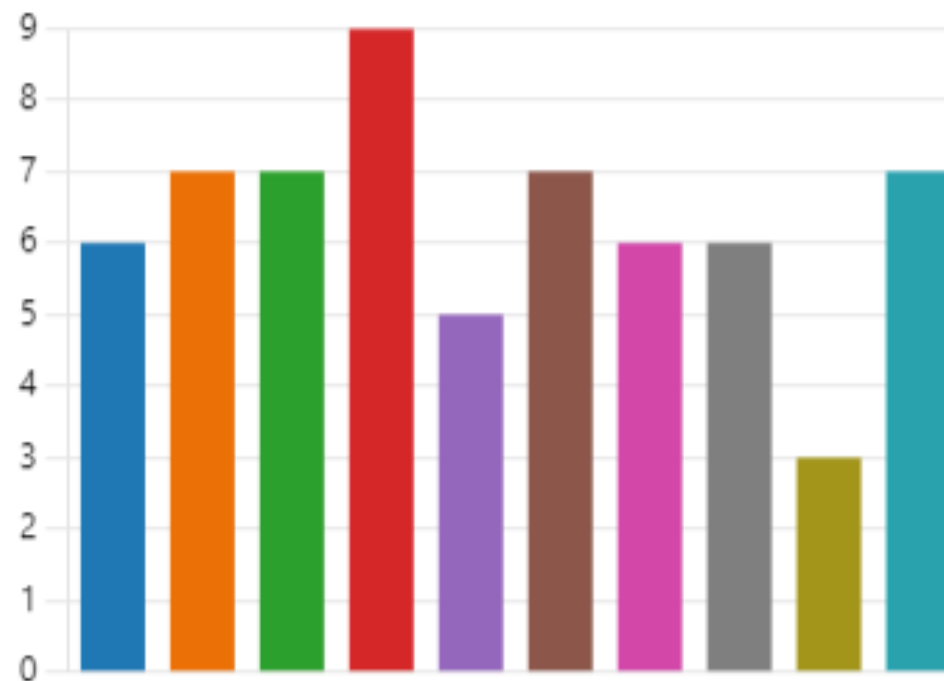
	The Forum, Towcester	6
	Northampton - eg The Guildhall	5
	No preference	2
	Other (please specify below)	0



Responses – meeting day / time #1

Which days/times are you able to attend?

Monday am	6
Monday pm	7
Tuesday am	7
Tuesday pm	9
Wednesday am	5
Wednesday pm	7
Thursday am	6
Thursday pm	6
Friday am	3
Friday pm	7



Responses – meeting day / time #2

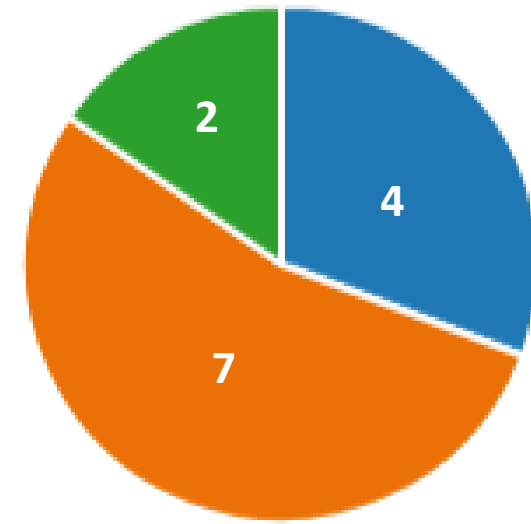
Of the days/times you are able to attend, which would you prefer? Are there other options we need to consider (such as after school meetings)?

- During school hours would be best.
- I would find after school meetings difficult due to the cycle of meetings we have after school.
- Any time in the selected hours is fine for me.
- An afternoon meeting means those who work in school miss a smaller proportion of the time when pupils are in school.
- I have some flexibility.
- Tuesday AM
- Tuesday or Thursday
- The time our current meetings finish mean travelling at rush hour – as someone who travels from East Northants this means navigating through Towcester and then Northampton.
- Afternoons are easier. After school not easy with governors and staff meetings.
- Afternoon after 2pm is best for us.
- Early afternoon
- Tuesday AM

Responses – substitute members

Do you have someone who could substitute for you if you were unable to attend?

 Yes	4
 No	7
 Maybe	2



Themes from responses

- There is no support for holding all meetings online only.
- There is similar support for hybrid meetings, for in-person meetings and for using a combination of approaches for different meetings.
- There is similar support for holding in-person meetings in Towcester or in Northampton, with no other locations suggested.
- There is no particular support for holding meetings outside of school hours due to clashes with other meetings that would result.
- Early afternoon meetings seem to work best for most members as this takes out a smaller proportion of the school day, although does mean travelling at rush hour afterwards.
- Tuesday PM received the most support as a meeting time, although it does not work for all members. There is a fairly even spread of support across every other slot between Monday AM and Thursday PM.

Other considerations

- Remote participation has been offered at recent Schools Forum meetings when requested.
- A desktop survey of schools forum meeting arrangements in nearby local authorities indicates that online meetings are still most common:

Online meetings	Bedford Borough, Cambridgeshire, Central Bedfordshire, Leicestershire, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire
In-person meetings	Buckinghamshire, Derbyshire
Combination	Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire

- In-person meetings seem to be viewed as most effective but can be more difficult to attend due to travelling time. Hybrid meetings can be most challenging to manage.
- Schools Forum has certain meetings in the year that are higher priority in that decisions on Schools and Early Years funding proposals are required.
- The Schools Forum meetings on Wednesday 18 October and Wednesday 13 December 2023 will give experience of meeting at a different time in the week to normal.

Areas for discussion

Schools Forum to use the results from the survey to consider and resolve:

- Future meeting format(s): in-person only; online only; hybrid; or a combination of formats.
- Any changes to the venue for in-person meetings: for example, rotating between The Forum, Towcester, and The Guildhall, Northampton.
- Any changes to the standard meeting day and/or start time.
- Any other actions that might be taken to support the effectiveness of Schools Forum meetings.