

Report to the Schools Forum March 2016

2016/17 Growth & KS1 Contingency Fund

1 Context

- 1.1 For 2016/17 the Schools Forum once again approved the putting aside of funds for a growth and KS1 contingency fund. £100,000 has been reserved for this purpose.
- 1.2 The main purpose of the fund is to assist schools that experience an increase in pupils during the year which leads to additional costs but that does not lead to any increase in funding until the following financial year. For maintained schools this means the following April, for academies the following September. Thus there can be a gap of two to three terms between increasing pupil numbers and funding arriving that reflects this.
- 1.3 The fund can also support schools that have KS1 pupil numbers that require an additional class, but that are only just above a multiple of 30.
- 1.4 To date, the thresholds for additional funds being allocated have been as follows:
 - Schools experiencing in-year growth in pupil numbers of more than 5%, where that growth was not a result of an increase in the school's admission number that was not supported by the LA, and where the school does not hold 'excessive' balances (above 5% of budget for secondary and above 8% for other schools);
 - Schools with Key Stage 1 pupil numbers that are less than a multiple of 30 plus 10 and where there is a statutory requirement to employ an additional teacher to comply with class size regulations.
- 1.5 Pupil growth is measured by comparing the most recent October census to the preceding year.
- 1.6 Until now, the allocations for growth have been made on a purely formulaic basis, allocating the basic per pupil element (aka AWPU) for additional pupils above 5% comparing the October census to the previous year, up to the point at which the new funding year for the school commences. The total payments from the fund are currently capped at the amount set aside for pupil growth. Without this cap, payments in 2015/16 would have been over £200K (albeit this includes £30K for the new Lawley Village academy).
- 1.7 Dealing with pupil growth is becoming a bigger issue locally and nationally. Pupil numbers in October 2015 were over 600 higher in T&W compared to the previous year. This issue was discussed at both the November 2015 and January 2016 Forums and the consensus expressed by the Forum was to move away from a purely formulaic approach to allow the flexibility to target the limited funds to schools with the greatest need. The LA was requested to design a framework to facilitate this.

2 Proposed Framework for Allocating Growth Funds in 2016/17

- 2.1 The proposed method is illustrated in Appendices 1 and 2, draft application documents for schools applying for growth or KS1 funding. The following principles apply:

- Requires individual schools to apply for support from the fund;
 - Retains the same data basis as previously, to provide data based core evidence;
 - Supplements this by specific questions for school;
 - Provides the opportunity for other general supporting information to be provided;
 - Gives the final decision to the Schools Forum, voting as a single body, at the November meeting of the Schools Forum.
- 2.2 It should be noted that some of the data used will not be finalised at this date, i.e. academies will not have published their accounts for the year ending the previous August and the DfE will not have ratified the October census data. However, if the decision is put back to the November meeting this postpones the time at which applying schools know whether or not they have been awarded additional funds.
- 2.3 The move away from a purely formulaic approach has the advantage that more of the overall context of a school can be taken into account. However it does mean that schools will not easily be able to predict whether or not, and how much, they can expect to receive from the fund until the decision is made.
- 2.4 The Forum is invited to consider the proposed approach and decide whether to follow this, or an amended approach for the distribution of pupil growth funds in 2016/17.

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