

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

12th January 2017

ITEM NO 3

PUPIL GROWTH FUND 2016/17 & 2017/18

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Schools Forum regarding growth fund requirements.

Background

2. The EFA allows the Local Authority to top slice DSG to create a growth fund to support schools which are required to provide extra places in order to meet basic need within the authority. Any growth fund must be approved by the School Forum prior to the commencement of the financial year. The EFA criteria for the creation of a growth fund, stipulates that “the growth fund may not be used to support schools in financial difficulty or general growth due to popularity”.
3. Forum agreed at their January 2016 meeting to set a growth fund, the criteria for which is detailed as follows.
 - Schools/Academies will only be able access the fund where they have had an increase in their PAN at the request of the local authority to meet a lack of available space in the local area as part of the planned changes covered in the SOP.
 - The actual funding allocated to a school will be based on the **actual** number of increased places on roll, not based on the increase in the PAN.
 - The actual numbers will be the number of pupils on the roll at the start of the Autumn term in comparison to the number of pupils funded in the individual school budget share (i.e. the last October census).
 - The amount to be funded per a pupil will be based on the “Basic Entitlement Funding” (AWPU) for the age group of the pupil.
 - Funding will be made for each term within that financial year, the school/academy has not received funding for this growth in places. (i.e. not funded within their existing school budget share).
 - It is proposed that any increases in admissions that meet the agreed criteria are funded automatically, rather than to be considered by School Forum.
 - Where there is a dispute over the funding amount, this will be presented to Forum for a final decision.
 - Schools Forum will be presented with updates on the spend against budget in year to allow budget monitoring and to inform for future years growth fund budget builds.

- All places are funded once the increase in the pupil admissions (in line with the PAN) reaches 15 places

Growth Fund 2016/17

4. The growth fund agreed for 2016/17 has the same criteria as was agreed by Forum in all years since the inception of the growth fund. The growth fund has been supporting three school increases in PAN as requested by the local authority over the last three years in line with the agreed criteria.
5. In the current year one of the schools accessing the growth fund for the creation of 15 new reception places has only had an uptake of 13 places at September 2016, therefore under the strict terms of the growth fund this school does not qualify for any growth funding as the increase in the number of pupils is less than the 15 threshold.
6. This situation is unfair to the school as an additional class has been created in line with a request from the local authority and hence the school has incurred the costs of creating the additional class.
7. It is therefore felt that the threshold of 15 when created was unfair to schools that have increased their PAN by slightly less than 15 places, as this means those schools will receive no funding where just one place is not taken up. It is proposed therefore that the threshold for funding places through the growth fund should be reduced from 15 places to 10 places, this means that this school will receive growth fund for 2016/17 as was expected.
8. This has no impact on the growth fund budget as the budget was set on the expectation of this payment being made. If agreed, it is also proposed to amend the growth fund going forward.

Growth Fund 2017/18

9. It is proposed that the growth fund will operate in 2017/18 in a very similar manner as to that agreed by Forum for 2016/17. However in line with the previous paragraphs a slight amendment is required. The criteria for accessing the fund is therefore proposed to operate in 2017/18 as follows,
 - Schools/Academies will only be able access the fund where they have had an increase in their PAN at the request of the local authority to meet a lack of available space in the local area as part of the planned changes covered in the SOP.
 - The actual funding allocated to a school will be based on the **actual** number of increased places on roll, not based on the increase in the PAN.
 - The additional number of places will be determined by comparing the number of pupils on the roll at the start of the autumn term in comparison to the number of pupils funded in the individual school budget share (i.e. the last October census).
 - All places are funded once the increase in the pupil admissions (in line with the PAN) reaches 10 places

- The amount to be funded per a pupil will be based on the “Basic Entitlement Funding” (AWPU) for the age group of the pupil.
- Funding will be made for each term within that financial year, the school/academy has not received funding for this growth in places. (i.e. not funded within their existing school budget share).
- It is proposed that any increases in admissions that fully meet the agreed criteria are funded automatically, rather than to be considered by School Forum.
- It is proposed that where a growth fund application requires a different approach, that these applications are presented to Forum with additional information in order that a separate decision can be made concerning that’s schools access to the growth fund.
- Where there is a dispute over the funding amount, this will be presented to Forum for a final decision.
- Schools Forum will be presented with updates on the spend against budget in year to allow budget monitoring and to inform for future years growth fund budget builds.

10. It is proposed that a growth fund of £193,036 be created for 2017/18.

Application to the Growth Fund 2017/18 – St George’s CE Academy

11. The Local Authority in partnership with St George’s CE Academy and Diocese of Durham is expanding St George’s by 105 places. The expansion is driven by committed housing development in the village of Middleton St George with the first of the new homes expected to be occupied in summer 2017. Unlike other recent expansions in the Borough this is in response to new development rather than a birth rate increase and therefore a slightly different approach is required.
12. Whilst St George’s will be increasing their PAN from 45 to 60 from admission year 2017/18 intake onwards and rolling that through the school, it also requires a flexible approach in other year groups in order to meet the demand from in year applications expected when children and families move into new homes in the village.
13. Although the increase in housing requires the increase in PAN, it is unknown exactly when places will be taken up as this is dependent on housing completion dates. In order for the school to expand and increase its capacity certainty is required over funding to allow teaching staff to be recruited. It is therefore proposed that rather than open all the new 105 places with associated staffing in 2017/18 the expansion is managed as follows.
- 75 new places to be opened in admission year 2017/18 across the school
 - The final 30 places to be opened in KS2 from admission year 2020/21 in line with expected demand and 60 pupil cohort moving up from year 2.

14. As the development of additional places at St George's requires a flexible approach it is proposed that a further report be brought back to Forum to detail the expansion and make a request for funding from the growth fund.

Recommendations

15. That Forum agree to an amendment to the 2016/17 criteria to allow all growth fund payments as was previously expected (Paragraph 7).
16. That Forum agrees to the proposed revised criteria for the operation of the growth fund in 2017/18
17. That Forum receives a further report at a future meeting to detail a request for growth funding at St George's CE Academy.

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