

SCHOOLS FORUM

Meeting date: 17th January 2020

From: Andy Smart – School Places Manager

GROWTH FUND 2019-20 AND 2020-21

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report updates Schools Forum on the distribution of the 2019-20 Growth Fund and proposed arrangements for 2020-21.

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Improving the financial and educational outcomes for schools and pupils is supportive of the Council Plan outcome that 'People in Cumbria are healthy and safe'.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 The Schools Forum is asked to note the distribution of the 2019-20 Growth Fund (Appendix 1) and approve the methodology for distribution in 2020-21 (Appendix 2).

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The Growth Fund provides support for schools which have experienced growth in pupil numbers as a result of planned expansion. It is designed to ensure that schools are not penalised, in financial terms, for admitting higher numbers in line with the county council's strategic priorities.

4.2 The Growth Fund 'fills the gap' between the beginning of the academic year in September, and the following April, when any additional pupils admitted the previous September will be taken into account when the school's budget is calculated. For example, where an extra class is required to accommodate additional numbers, the Growth Fund can be called upon to fund staffing for that class from September until the end of March, which would otherwise be unfunded. Subsequently, that class will be funded via the normal operation of the formula.

4.3 Schools which have experienced such growth are invited to submit a request setting out a breakdown of, and their justification for, the additional funding sought. Schools which have voluntarily exceeded PAN are not eligible for additional support via the Growth Fund, and are notified of this during any discussions with the School Admissions Team when places are being allocated.

- 4.4 Appendix 1 sets out this year's allocations. Primary schools expanded through the Transforming Learning programme, in 2011-12, were eligible for Growth Funding until 2018-19; all seven year groups in those schools are now operating at the higher PAN. A lower level of funding has, therefore, been required for 2019-20, and that lower amount remains underspent.
- 4.5 That said, further expansions are likely to be undertaken in response to new housing, and to growth in the secondary sector; the Growth Fund will continue to be required in the future if additional pupils are to be accommodated and educated appropriately.
- 4.6 A higher amount is proposed to be set aside for the Growth Fund in 2020-21. The reasons for this are explained in the Dedicated Schools Grant Budget 2020-21 paper to this meeting. The proposed eligibility criteria for allocating the growth fund and the methodology for allocating it 2020-21 are attached at Appendix 2 for consideration and discussion by the Schools Forum. As the growth fund forms part of the Schools Block it applies to both maintained and academy primary and secondary schools only. As detailed in the Dedicated Schools Grant Budget 2020-21 the allocation of the fund will be monitored during the year. Any underspend against the budget will be reported to Schools Forum. Any under or overspend against the budget will transfer to the DSG reserves. However, in accordance with the DfE guidance the local authority can decide to carry forward any unspent growth funding to support growth in future years.

5.0 OPTIONS

- 5.1 Schools Forum is asked to note the report with regard to the Fund's distribution in 2019-20.
- 5.2 Schools Forum can either approve the methodology proposed for 2020-21 or substitute its own methodology.

6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Resource and value for money implications are considered throughout this report.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This paper updates the Schools Forum on the allocation of the Growth Fund for 2019-20 and proposed arrangements for its operation in 2020-21.

Andy Smart
School Places Manager

10th January 2020

Appendix 1 – Growth Fund Allocations 2019-20
Appendix 2 – Growth Fund Criteria 2020-21

REPORT AUTHOR

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