

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 17th MAY 2018

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

GROWTH FUND 2018-19

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Forum of a growth fund that was created for 2018-19 as part of the local Schools funding formula, and to advise how this will be drawn down by schools in 2018-19.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Schools Budget was allocated to schools based on Wirral's local formula as agreed at January Forum. This process took into account the closure of Kingsway School in August 2018.

2.2 However, it was not known at that stage where a number of the pupils currently attending Kingsway School would be attending from September 2018. Therefore, following the advice of DfE this funding was allocated to a Growth Fund and totalled £391k.

3.0 USE OF GROWTH FUND

3.1 As per DfE guidance, a growth fund can only be used to:

- support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need;
- support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation;
- meet the costs of new school.

3.2 Local authorities are responsible for funding the growth needs for all schools in their area, for new and existing maintained schools and academies.

3.3 The growth fund may not be used to support schools in financial difficulty, or for general growth due to popularity which is managed through lagged funding.

3.4 Local authorities are required to have criteria on which any growth funding is to be allocated, which must be agreed by the schools forum. The schools forum must be consulted on the total size of the growth fund, and should receive regular updates on the use of the funding.

3.5 The criteria should provide a transparent and consistent basis for the allocation of funding. Criteria for allocating growth funds should contain clear objective trigger points for qualification and a clear formula for calculating allocations with these criteria applying to all schools on the same basis.

3.6 Criteria would generally contain some of the features set out below:

- support where a school or academy has agreed with the authority to provide an extra class in order to meet basic need in the area (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment);
- additional support where a school has extended its age range (the majority of funding would be paid through the funding formula where the local authority should seek a variation in pupil numbers);
- support where a school has temporarily increased its PAN, by a minimum number of pupils, in agreement with the authority;
- support for KS1 classes where overall pupil numbers exceed a multiple of 30, by a minimum number of pupils;
- pre-opening costs, initial equipping allowance, or diseconomy of scale allowance, for new maintained schools and academies; including new academies where the school is opening in response to basic need.

Wirral's criteria is in relation to the transfer of pupils from Kingsway Academy as an exceptional one-off case that has been approved by the ESFA.

4.0 DISTRIBUTING GROWTH FUNDING

- 4.1 Methodologies for distributing funding include:
- a lump sum payment;
 - a per-pupil rate;

The per-pupil rate for successor schools will be used for Kingsway pupils.

- 4.2 Where growth funding is payable to academies, the local authority should fund the increase for the period from the additional September intake through until the following August.
- 4.3 Where schools have agreed an expansion in pupil numbers with the local authority, the school should ensure that they understand the methodology for funding the increase, and are content that the expansion is deliverable within the funding available.

5.0 UNSPENT GROWTH FUNDING

- 5.1 Local authorities should report any under or over spent growth funding at the year-end to the schools forum.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That the Forum notes the report and the use of the growth fund in 2018-19.
- 6.2 That the only growth fund criteria to be considered in 2018-19 is in relation to growth in pupil numbers from the closure of Kingsway Academy.
- 6.3 That the growth fund is for one year only and it is not anticipated that the need for a growth fund extends beyond 2018-19.

Paul Boyce
Director of Children's Services