

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**SCHOOLS FORUM – 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION**

#### **2023-24 FALLING ROLLS AND GROWTH FUND**

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#### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose the option for the falling rolls and growth fund in 2023-24.

#### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Following consideration by Schools Forum meetings in October 2022, the criteria for distributing the falling rolls and growth fund for 2022-23 was agreed as:

- the growth and falling rolls fund would be one fund, and
- allocation of the fund will be based on 3-year pupil number changes (not percentage growth or fall), and
- where the cumulative % change is 10% or more

2.2 The value of the falling rolls and growth fund for 2023-24 is reported at the June 2023 meeting as £19k. The value of the fund is currently determined by the 'headroom' in the Schools Block allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) after the funding formula has been applied. Following consultation with schools in October 2022, it was agreed that the 2023-24 funding formula would include a +0.5% minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to secure the widest possible distribution of the allocation directly to schools.

2.3 As reported at the January 2023 meeting, due to a change in the pupil characteristics between October 21 and October 22 censuses, the "headroom" in the schools block allocation for 2023-24 is significantly lower than previous years (£153k in 2021-22 and £131k in 2022-23). The growth funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2023-24 has been utilised to allocate individual schools funding applying the National Funding Formula (NFF)

#### **3.0 2023-24 FUND PROPOSAL**

3.1 It is proposed that the 2023-24 Falling Rolls and Growth fund to be carried forward to 2024-25 as the value is deemed to be too low to distribute to multiple schools as useful individual allocations that support their effective use.

3.2 The Schools Operational Guide: 2023 to 24 states that it is allowed the growth funding to be carried forward to the following funding period, and local authorities can choose to use it specifically for growth. The same applies to the falling roll funding.

## **4.0 FUTURE FOCUS**

4.1 Department for Education (DfE) has published Growth and falling rolls fund guidance:2024 to 2025 in July 23.

4.2 The guidance states that the 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 revenue cost of new schools.

From 2024 to 2025 local authorities will need to provide growth funding where a school or academy has agreed with the local authority to provide an extra class to meet basic need in the area (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment).

4.3 The growth fund must not be used to support:

- schools in financial difficulty
- general growth due to popularity.

4.4 The falling rolls funding should be distributed where school capacity data 2022 (SCAP) shows that school places will be required in the subsequent three to five year and the requirement that schools must be Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding' to be eligible for falling rolls funding will no longer apply from the 2024 to 2025 financial year.

4.5 The criteria for both fund 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.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 That Schools Forum agree the 2023-24 Falling Rolls and Growth Fund to be carried forward to 2024-25.

5.2 That the Forum notes the future focus set out in section 4.0.

**Simone White**  
**Director of Children, Families and Education**