

SLOUGH SCHOOLS' FORUM
8th March 2016

**Growth Fund – Increased class size funding mechanism
(Directorate of Wellbeing)**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from Schools Forum for a mechanism for funding additional school places over and above the existing Planned Admissions Number (PAN) of schools, when requested by Slough to meet Basic Need requirements.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The recommendation is that the Growth Fund criteria described in section 5 is approved.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The proposed mechanism for funding pupils above PAN is based on the principle that costs to the Growth Fund should be minimised as this is a limited fund while ensuring that schools are adequately funded for the extra pupils they admit.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Initially the criteria for the Growth Fund was only applied to primary schools as this was where the need was but the funding is not phase specific and it was understood that it would eventually apply to secondary schools as the growth pressure worked its way through. There is now a pressure on places for Years 9, 10 and 11.
- 4.2 Initially, it was proposed that academies would not be funded for the period April to August unless pupils were recorded on the APT. To avoid underfunding and or schools refusing to admit pupils without appropriate funding, the mechanism provides funding to cover this period for academies.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 At a meeting on 12th January 2016 Schools Forum approved the provision of additional funding from the Growth fund for schools that admit pupils above their PAN at the request of Slough Borough

Council. Schools Forum requested that the details of the funding mechanism were brought back in March for formal approval.

5.2 The details of the funding mechanism are included below.

Funding Mechanism

Schools will receive Age Weighed Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding at 2015-16 level for 'the period' that they make each 'additional place' available at the request of Slough to meet basic need growth.

Additional Place – This is a school place that is over and above the PAN for that year group; it is also higher than the number of pupils in that year group as at the October Census for that academic year. This definition avoids double funding pupils, as schools will receive funding for the number on roll reported as part of this Census. Funding will only be provided for pupils in year groups Reception up to Year 11.

The Period - This will be agreed in units of whole terms as a minimum except in the first term which may already have started. This will allow revenue funding to be provided near the start of each term and avoid the need for claw back.

Agreement – The funding is not retrospective and will only apply where it is agreed by Slough that funding will be provided in advance.

5.3 **Academies**

There is an issue with funding of academies between April and August as the Education Funding Agency (EFA) funds academies from April to August in arrears. The time to claim this funding is January each year at budget build time via the APT. Any decisions to create places after this date cannot be recouped from the EFA. Therefore the Growth Fund will also fund this period for academies.

5.4 **Non-Academies**

As currently happens with bulge classes, the Growth Fund will support non-academy schools from September to March, thereafter funding is provided via the next School Census in October. This is because non-academies (maintained schools) are funded April to March.

5.5 **Affordability**

Currently there remains £203K available in the 2015-16 Growth Fund for funding further new places and a budget allocation of £1.25m agreed for 2016-17. The Growth Fund covers the period April to March, so creating larger classes at academies will entail a commitment of funding spanning 2 Growth Fund years. This

commitment would be subject to approval of the Growth Fund each year by Schools Forum.

On average each new place created via larger classes will cost:

- £265 for both academies and non-academies, per calendar month up to the end of March
- A further £1,325 for places at academies to fund the period April to August.

While places at non-academies will be preferred due to the lower cost to the Growth Fund, appropriate places may not always be available at maintained schools.

5.6 **Future Years**

The intention is that similar criteria for funding larger classes are included within the range of Growth Fund options each year, although the funding mechanism and criteria need to be reviewed and approved by Schools Forum annually to reflect other changes to schools' funding.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Local Authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential.

Section 151 Officer – Strategic Director of Resources

- 6.2 The financial implications of the report are outlined in the supporting information.

Access Implications

- 6.3 There are no access implications.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 School Organisation Group (SOG).

8 Background Papers

Report to Slough Schools Forum on 12th January 2016 “Growth Fund 2016-17 – Increased class size funding mechanism”

Contact for further information

Coral Miller (Principal Accountant, ECS)
(01753 477209)
coral.miller@slough.gov.uk

Tony Madden (Principal Asset Manager)
(01753 875739)
tony.madden@slough.gov.uk