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|  | | Coventry Schools Forum 18th January 2024  Agenda Item 6 |
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| Education and Skills | |

**Title: Approval of Growth Fund 2024/25**

**Recommendation**

This item is for the School Forum to approve:

* **The Schools Forum should approve the proposed value and operation of the 2023/24 growth fund as set out in this report.**

**Voting:** All Members

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## Executive Summary

### The Schools Forum are required on an annual basis to approve the proposed level of budget for the Growth Fund and the operation of that fund.

## Background

### The Growth Fund is a portion of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Schools Block which enables local authorities (LAs) to support schools with significant in-year pupil growth which is not otherwise immediately recognised by the lagged funding system.

### At the December Schools Forum meeting it was decided to use the Growth Fund to support schools to:

##### Provide additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation. (i.e. Class Size funding)

##### Provide additional classes in agreement with the LA to meet pre-16 basic need growth. (i.e. Increasing Forms of Entry, Planned Secondary Growth & Bulge Classes)

* Take significant numbers of new pupils outside the usual admissions window process (i.e. In-year Admissions).
* Ensure sufficient places are retained to ensure basic need is met in Secondary Schools (i.e. Secondary Capacity)

##### Statutorily the Growth Fund also funds schools that meet the criteria of a ‘growing’ school and subsequently their funding allocations are calculated based on estimated pupil numbers (i.e., Implicit Growth).

### Since 2019/20 the Growth Fund has been allocated to local authorities on a formulaic basis. This means that the level of growth funding Coventry receives is directly linked to the increased number of pupils in the city vs the previous year. It also means that Coventry’s allocation of DSG for growth fluctuates annually.

### At the December Schools Forum meeting it was agreed that in the event that the Growth Fund is not affordable, the steps for reducing growth allocations to point of affordability are:

#### Step 1 – Look to utilise any previous Growth Fund underspends to meet the gap.

#### Step 2 – Look to reduce the cost of individual Growth Fund elements as far as is necessary to meet the remaining gap. These elements have been prioritised into five groups. If necessary, the lowest ranked group would be reduced to zero before moving on to reduce the next ranked group. The rank is set out below:

*(higher funding priority)*

Rank 1 – Implicit Growth for growing schools – *have a legal duty to fund in full.*

Rank 2 – Planned Secondary Growth, Primary Increasing Form of Entry & Bulge Classes– *This funding cannot drop below the minimum funding that must be provided as per the 2024/25 Growth Fund guidance*.

Rank 3 – Secondary Capacity

Rank 4 – Class Size funding for half form of entry schools

Rank 3 – Class Size & In-year admissions – *the remaining growth elements*

*(lower funding priority)*

## Approval of the 2024/25 Growth Fund

### The Schools Forum is required to approve the operation of the Growth Fund and be consulted on its total size.

### As outlined in section 2 the Growth Fund we receive from the DFE changes each year in line with increases in pupil numbers. For 2024/25 this has meant an increase of £45k to £2,705k.

### As a result of final pupil number data being available and growth fund calculations being completed, the Schools Forum Sub-Group is reconvening on 15th January 2024. This is not to change the areas that the fund supports, or the rank of each of the areas of the growth fund, but it will be to review financial unit rates, allocations, and the overall distribution of the fund across the different rates.

### A full report will be circulated on 16th January 2024 containing the finalised sub group recommendation, and an appendix outlining the detailed operation of the fund.

## Who does the report affect?

### The issues in this report affect all mainstream schools and academies in the city as all are potentially eligible for growth funding depending on the circumstances of their school.

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| Contributor/approver name | Title | Directorate or organisation | Date doc sent out/ | Date response received or approved |
| Sarah Kinsell | Finance Manager | Financial Management | 10/01/2024 | 11/01/2024 |
| Rachael Sugars | Head of Education Improvement and Standards | Education and Skills | 10/01/2024 | 11/01/2024 |

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