

## **Merton Schools Forum 20 June 2019**

### **Use of Growth fund for additional pupils**

#### **Recommendation**

1. To agree that the Growth Fund allocated for secondary schools (Growth Fund budget is £440,000 in the 2019/20 financial year) can be used as described in paragraph 12b of this paper.

#### **Introduction**

2. The council is able to top slice the DSG to provide a 'Growth Fund'. This has been used for many years to fund schools that are providing an extra class to support the basic need for school places, to cover the time lag in that school formula funding is provided in the following financial year based on pupil numbers in the previous October census (this is 7/12 for maintained schools and 12 months for Academy Schools).
3. For primary schools, the allocation increased to £60,000 per class for the 7/12 and at its peak in 2014/15 the total allocations were £1.38 million. As the expansion has largely now flowed through the primary schools, only two schools will receive an allocation in 2019/20, so £120,000.
4. The sum for secondary schools is agreed as £80,000 per class to cover the 7/12 time lag; as Academies are funded on an academic year basis the remaining 5/12 for Academies (£57,000) is recovered from the ESFA, so £137,000 in total. This is attributable to £4,566 per pupil place for a full academic year.
5. As the level of expansion in the secondary sector has not been as high as for primary school the total budget allocations have been far lower, especially as 6 forms of entry is through the new school (Harris Academy Wimbledon) and so Growth Funding was only provided in the first year.
6. For the 2019/20 financial year the budget is £440,000; £120,000 for primary schools and £320,000 for secondary schools. The funding for the secondary school element is intended for an extra 2 classes flowing through Harris Merton and provision for 2 classes as a contingency based on pupil forecasts. This is only being used for one school (St. Mark's Academy) for the 2019/20 academic year. The council had a number of unplaced children on offer day and St. Mark's agreed to provide for an extra class.
7. The Schools Forum has previously advised that they would not support proposals to allocate Growth Funding to schools that are filling back up to their Published Admission Number.

### **Issue to be resolved**

8. While there will always be some lag in funding from a school having a net increase of pupils including after October school census, this is generally relatively minor and schools will generally lose pupils as well as gain them.
9. However, for secondary schools in the 2019/20 academic year we are likely to be in a position where there will be a very small number of surplus of places in 8 and 9 (and possibly year 7 though this may be resolved through the extra bulge class at St. Mark's), and we could be in a position where in-year applications are received but there are no vacancies available, yet not be in the position where we would want to agree and fund a full bulge class.
10. In 2018/19 Year 7 only Raynes Park and St. Mark's have any substantive Year 7 vacancies against PAN and so were required to disproportionately provide for in-year admissions. Following a sudden influx of admissions in early 2019, St. Mark's agreed to provide for 7 additional pupils that impacted on the organisation and finances of their school yet got no growth funding could be allocated. For 2019/20 Raynes Park, like other schools, will be full with a waiting list.
11. This has the potential to cause practical issue in placing in-year admissions as schools are resistant to take extra pupils when they know there is no immediate funding from them and there is no obligation to take pupils above their number; the council can potentially be in a position where it is not possible to provide statutory school places for children. Since it may only be practical to place a significant number of pupils in one or two schools, it is considered appropriate to use the Growth Fund more flexibly than in the past.

### **Proposals to consider**

12. In circumstances where the council agrees with the Headteachers representatives at the secondary school Hard to Place Panel (HTPP) that all schools in a year group should be considered full, then either:
  - a. Schools may agree to collectively take slightly above their admission numbers (in addition to the HTP limit of two per school) as and when without any additional paymentor:
  - b. The council will seek to negotiate that one or more school increases their year group capacity cap for the year group cohort in the school by 10 or more places, thus enabling the council to provide immediate and further placements for the remainder of the academic year. On the assumption that the in-year pupils will arrive after the October school census, it will be funded on a pro-rata basis at £4,566 per place. e.g. if

a school agrees the availability of 10 additional places from 1 January the school would receive  $8/12 \times 10 \times £4,566 = £30,440$ .

13. If the school continues to provide for a growth of 10 or more pupils for this cohort in the following full academic year then a further allocation will be considered for proportional bulge class funding, as is already provided for in the scheme.