

Meeting: Schools Forum

Date: 12 June 2017

Subject: Growth fund

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Summary: This report seeks approval from the School Forum to a standardised rate of payment to schools eligible for growth funding as proposed by the technical sub group.

Contact Officers: Victor Wan, Head of School Organisation,
Admissions and Capital Planning (Interim)

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) Approve the standardised Growth Fund payment package from the financial year 2017/2018, replacing the current Growth Fund application process made by schools.**

Proposal in principle agreed

1. At the meeting in March 2017 the Forum agreed in principle to the proposal that a standardised payments package was implemented to ensure equity, transparency and consistency of payments across all schools eligible for growth funding.
2. Schools should be well informed of the growth fund eligible for school places commissioned by the authority. The process should be simplified and exceptional circumstances should only be considered by the Growth Fund Panel, hence the sum is fixed where possible.

Sub technical group meeting

3. As agreed at the March 2017 Forum meeting the following members and officers met to discuss and agree on the payment packages that would be awarded from the growth fund to eligible schools from the 2017/18 financial year:
 - Sue Howley MBE, Chair of Governors at Fairfield Park Lower School
 - Karen Hayward, Principal at Sandy Upper School
 - Ali Brabner, Chair of Governors at Cranfield Academy
 - Sharon Ingham, Principal at Hadrian Academy
 - Paul Burrett, Headteacher at Studham Lower

- Dawn Hill, Senior Finance Manager, Children’s Services at Central Bedfordshire Council
- Victor Wan, Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning at Central Bedfordshire Council
- Jessica Mortimer-Wabel, Admissions Manager at Central Bedfordshire Council

Proposed arrangements

4. The technical sub group met on the 2 May 2017 to consider the details of the growth fund. Appendices A and B indicate the proposed packages.
5. Appendix A provides a typical payment model for the growth fund payment package for a 1 Form of Entry expansion.
6. A breakdown of the pupil led funding is as follows:-

25 X AWPU for the additional 1FE class commissioned by the LA

Key Stage	AWPU per child	Annual award	7/12 th (Sep-Mar)	5/12 th (Apr-Aug)
1	£3,088	£77,200	£45,033	£32,167
2	£3,088	£77,200	£45,033	£32,167
3	£4,350	£108,750	£63,437.50	£45,312.50
4	£5,059	£126,475	£73,777	£52,698

7. Appendix B outlines the first year payment for second site expansions. For subsequent years of the programme the 1FE formula will be applied per class established in a financial year (appendix A).
8. This annual forecast will enable the School Forum to have an early indication of the demand for the growth fund. Each school/academy currently eligible for growth fund payments would receive a payment forecast outlining the remaining period of the programme and the payment schedule for the programme. This will be subject to further review following announcement of the national funding formulae for schools.
9. Moving forward the Council would share with prospective schools the growth fund payment package as well as the FF&E payments as part of the expansion discussions. Once an expansion was agreed a payment forecast would be provided to the school/academy outlining the payment forecast and schedule of payments for the programme period.
10. The benefits of the standardised payment system:
 - I. By being able to accurately forecast the payments for the financial year this will allow Forum to provide a much more informed budget when requesting the growth fund top slice in future years
 - II. The set payment amounts provide schools with autonomy for establishing their additional classes and an incentive to achieve value for money. It also enables schools to plan ahead as they will know the sum they are to receive at the beginning of each financial year
 - III. Removes the onerous task for schools of making a growth fund claim
 - IV. Streamlines process
 - V. Ensures growth fund money is distributed equitably to all eligible schools

11. An annual review of payment amounts would take place during December each year by officers which would then be presented to Forum at January meeting. If further review required by forum members this would take place prior to the March meeting.

Conclusion

12. School Forum to agree to the payment packages as proposed by the sub technical group from April 2017
13. Once the proposed payments have been agreed the School Finance Team will release the payments.
14. An annual review of the payment packages to be undertaken ahead of each new financial year to ensure they remain fair and relevant.