

Appendix 2 – Growth Fund Policy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following guidance provides details of the methodology for the local distribution for growth and new schools funding during the 2024/25 financial year approved by Schools Forum at the meeting held on 13th December 2023.
- 1.2 As per the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) [Growth and falling rolls fund guidance: 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/growth-and-falling-rolls-fund-guidance-2024-to-2025) 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 legislation. (Please note: The growth fund is not used for this purpose within Cambridgeshire due to the overall cost.)
 - meet the cost of new schools. (Pre-opening and diseconomies funding as prescribed in the New Schools Funding Policy.)
- 1.3 The Growth Fund must **not** be used to support:
- schools in financial difficulty: any such support for maintained schools should be provided from a de-delegated contingency
 - general growth due to popularity; this is managed through lagged funding. This includes cases where academies have admitted above pupil admission numbers (PAN) by their own choice
 - Nursery and/or Post-16 / Sixth form education.
- 1.4 Local authorities are responsible for funding these growth needs for all schools in their area, for new and existing maintained schools and academies. Local authorities should fund all schools on the same criteria. Where growth occurs in academies that are funded by Education and Schools Funding Agency (ESFA) on estimates, ESFA will use the pupil number adjustment process to ensure the academy is only funded for the growth once.
- 1.5 The Growth Fund may not be the most appropriate source of funding for growing schools, and the local authorities should use varying pupil numbers where there is a more permanent and significant change to numbers, and where it's appropriate for the change to be reflected in the funding formula (such as new schools growing to capacity or changes to age range).
- 1.6 As such, the Growth Fund is ring-fenced so that it is only used for the purposes of supporting growth in pupil numbers to meet **basic need** in both maintained schools and Academies. Any growth or expansion due to parental preference/popularity will **not** be eligible to be funded from the Growth Fund.
- 1.7 Local Authorities (LAs) are required to propose the criteria on which any growth funding is to be allocated to Schools Forum for approval. The criteria should both set out the circumstances in which a payment could be made and provide a basis for calculating the sum to be paid. The LA will also need to consult Schools Forum on the total sum to be retained and must update Schools Forum on the use of the funding. It is essential that the use of the Growth Fund is entirely transparent and solely for the purposes of supporting growth in pupil numbers.

2.0 FALLING ROLLS FUNDING

- 2.1 For the first time in 2024 to 2025 the ESFA will allocate funding based on both growth and falling rolls.
- 2.2 Falling rolls funding will be distributed on the basis of the reduction in pupil numbers that local authorities experience for each year. It is based on the observed differences between the primary and secondary number on roll in each local authority between the October 2022 and October 2023 school censuses. Falling rolls are measured at the Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) – these are areas used by the ONS based on population data, which allow us to capture falling rolls in small geographical areas within local authorities. The falling rolls allocation for each local authority will be £140,000 per MSOA which sees a 10% or greater reduction in the number of pupils on roll between the two census years. This allocation will be subject to an area cost adjustment (ACA).
- 2.3 Local authorities will continue to have discretion over whether to operate a falling rolls fund. Where local authorities operate a fund, they will only be able to provide funding where school capacity data 2022 (SCAP) shows that school places will be required in the subsequent three to five years. This SCAP requirement replaces previous guidance that funding may only be used where local planning data shows that the surplus places will be needed within the next 3 financial years.
- 2.4 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. Therefore it was felt it was an appropriate time to consider whether or not to implement a falling rolls fund for Cambridgeshire schools.
- 2.5 Although there is a recognition a number of schools have experienced falling rolls between the October 2022 and October 2023 census points once aggregated to MSOA level the ESFA formula only generates circa £141k of funding relating to one specific area within Cambridgeshire.
- 2.6 Following review of the 2022 SCAP data there are also concerns about the accuracy of the future year forecasts for some schools. Although these are no longer the most recent forecasts the use of them is mandatory to identify schools who would potentially qualify for falling rolls funding if implemented. There are a number of instances where the forecasts between 2022-23 and 2023-24 showed growth, but numbers actually reduced, resulting in an incorrect baseline for future years.
- 2.7 As a result, and following discussion with Schools Forum the decision was taken that a falling rolls fund is not implemented at this time on the basis that:
- Minimal additional funding to be received from the DfE for falling rolls, and therefore any costs associated with a falling rolls fund would further increase the required topslice from schools.
 - Concerns about the accuracy of 2022 SCAP and its use to identify qualifying schools (which is a mandatory requirement).

3.0 GROWTH FUND PROCESS AND CRITERIA 2024/25

3.1 Following feedback from schools and discussions at the Schools Forum meeting on 4th November 2022 the agreed approach for 2024/25 does not require schools to submit an application to access growth funding.

3.2 **Process** - The approach for 2024/25 will continue to take a more formulaic approach alongside the latest Place Planning information on planned expansions and requests for schools to operate additional classes to meet basic need in their area. As such the following process will be followed:

- 1) On receipt of the October 2023 census current forecasts and local knowledge will be used to identify schools where there is planned or potential growth expected from September 2024.
- 2) Where this forecast / expected growth is in excess of 15 pupils in Primary or 25 pupils in Secondary an initial view will be taken as to:
 - a. Whether the growth is due to basic need?
 - b. Whether the school would need to reorganise / employ additional teachers to accommodate the increase in pupils?
- 3) If the question to both of these is “Yes” these schools would be identified as potentially qualifying for growth funding.

Where schools have been identified as potentially qualifying for growth consideration will then need to be given to the most appropriate funding route:

- 4) **Variation to Pupil Numbers** – to be applied for more permanent structural changes to the number of pupils (new schools, planned expansions etc) where there is certainty there will be a need for extra places from September 2024. This should be recorded on the Authority Profoma Tool (APT) in January 2024 and would be managed through a variation to pupil numbers.
- 5) **Retained Growth Fund** – to be applied where there is less certainty over the changes to the number of pupils. Instances where numbers are yet to be confirmed and as such the local authority has not yet agreed any additional placements but know that they will need to do so within the next year. This is an appropriate reason to hold money in the growth fund and to use as and when the basic need occurs.
- 6) The Area Education officer for the school will discuss the forecast growth with the school and then provide evidence to the Officer Growth panel for justification of the school qualifying for growth funding.
- 7) Cases which are not straight forward, or where evidence is questioned by the officer panel will be taken to the LA/Head teacher rep Panel for comment.
- 8) Those schools identified as potentially qualifying for growth funding through Variation to Pupil Numbers will be notified alongside the 2024/25 budget information in late January / early February.

- 9) Those schools identified as potentially qualifying for growth funding from the Retained Growth Fund will be notified in principle in mid-February / March, although funding allocations would not be confirmed at this stage.
- 10) The information / forecasts would continue to be refined as revised pupil numbers / admissions data becomes available with initial proposals shared with schools in March/April.
- 11) Schools will be informed by a letter detailing the award of growth funding from their Area Education Officer throughout the spring and early summer term.
- 12) In instances where numbers were still inconclusive, the Growth Panel would reserve the right to defer a final decision until the start of the 2024-25 academic year.
- 13) In the event of exceptional circumstances which were not identified as part of the initial process, schools would have the opportunity to contact the appropriate place planning officer via placeplanningreferrals0-19@cambridgeshire.gov.uk and discuss their individual circumstances.

3.3 **Principles** - The following principles will continue to be applied in assessing the eligibility of schools to access additional funding:

- Where the predicted numbers for a Primary or Secondary School (excluding nursery classes and Post-16) for the following September show an increase, due to basic need, requiring the running of additional classes and/or significant restructure the school may be able to access additional funding.
- Where schools have chosen to admit above their Published Admissions Number (PAN) to meet parental preference from outside of their agreed planning area (**not** basic need), they will **not** be eligible to receive funding from the Growth Fund in recognition that the LA could have secured places for the children concerned at other schools.
- Where schools take the decision to extend their admission arrangements to give priority to children attending or in the catchment area of an out-of-county or out-of-area school, they will not be eligible to receive Growth Funding for the pupils concerned.
- In instances where the LA has specifically requested a school to expand to take an additional class to create capacity, but the forecast numbers do not represent the need for an additional class, schools may be able to claim additional funding. The funding will only be payable if the school is unable to reorganise its class teaching structure to meet the request.
- Where the LA has not specifically requested a school to operate an additional class, the school may be required to provide evidence that an additional class or tutor group and/or significant restructure would be required to meet basic need.
- A class is defined as “additional” if it requires a change in the school’s current or historical class organisation or number of classes. In Primary schools this may result in mixed year teaching where numbers dictate and this is seen as the most prudent option for the organisation of the school as a whole.

- Schools that have historically operated mixed-age classes or have a PAN in a multiple of less than 20 would be normally expected to operate some mixed-age classes. (The Growth Fund cannot be used to reduce class sizes.)
- The requirement for additional classes or forms of entry will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Funding will be allocated based on the requirement for additional support / classes / forms of entry.

4.0 **FUNDING**

4.1 For the first time in 2024 to 2025 local authorities will be required 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). As a minimum local authorities will have to provide funding to a level which is compliant with the following formula:

primary growth factor value (£1,550) × number of pupils × ACA

The primary growth factor value will be used for all school types – recognising there is one teacher pay scale and that this funding is a minimum value.

Our current Growth Fund criteria will only provide funding where schools can evidence the need to operate an extra class to meet basic need (the growth fund does not support growth due to popularity/parental preference).

Funding for an additional class will therefore be calculated on the basis of 30 pupils:

£1,550 x 30 x 1.01333 =

Phase	Current 7/12th	Current 12/12th	New 7/12th	New 12/12th
Primary	£31,500+£4,000	£54,000 +£4,000	£47,120	£80,777
Secondary	£37,917+£4,000	£65,000 +£4,000	£47,120	£80,777

Please note:

- Due to the overall increases in funding rates, resources will no longer be funded separately.
- Pro-rata allocations will be made where 0.5FE is deemed appropriate.
- As noted above, no funding adjustments will be made in respect of “missing” pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Funding will be guaranteed for the year for which it was agreed, i.e. no clawback will be applied. However schools should be mindful that if numbers do not

materialise (and are therefore not recorded on the October census) this may impact on funding for future years.

- Funding for maintained schools is only guaranteed for the financial year to which it relates. Future years funding will be assessed annually during the budget setting process.
- Where the LA has requested maintained schools to run an additional class and numbers do not materialise, funding to recognise the difference will be provided to compensate for the 5/12th period April to August. This will be calculated on the basis of 5/12th of the academic year Growth Fund allocation less the basic entitlement received for pupils in the additional class based on the October census.

4.2 Other Considerations

- The level of revenue balances for maintained schools and academies will be requested and considered as part of the application process. Any school with a revenue balance deemed as excessive would **not** be permitted to claim the full value of the additional growth funding. These instances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- New schools which are no longer funded via guaranteed variations to pupil numbers, but are still growing to capacity will be subject to the process and principles set out above. However, recognition will be given to the uncertainties in pupil numbers for such schools supporting new communities, and as such decisions may need to be taken outside of the timescales applied to more established schools.
- Schools are required to use the growth fund to comply with the request set out in the Local Authority's growth fund confirmation letter. If it is not used for this purpose the Local Authority reserve the right to request this funding is returned.

4.3 **Academies** will take account of the additional guidance in **Appendix 2a** and be subject to the same criteria as above with the following additions and amendments:

- Where an academy is expanding due to parental preference rather than basic need the academy can bid directly to the ESFA, rather than being funded from the LA Growth Fund.
- Any funding allocated would be for the full academic year as original funding is based on the previous October Census. This would be subject to confirmation of actual funded numbers from the ESFA and would be calculated on receipt of the October Census at the start of the new academic year.

DfE additional guidance states:

“Where academies are funded on estimates, however, there is no need for them to access the growth fund for this purpose. This is because they will receive additional funding through a pupil number adjustment for actual numbers. We will identify academies funded on estimates in the January edition of the APT. Around 90% of former non-recoupment academies are funded on estimates.”

5.0 NEW SCHOOL FUNDING CRITERIA 2024/25

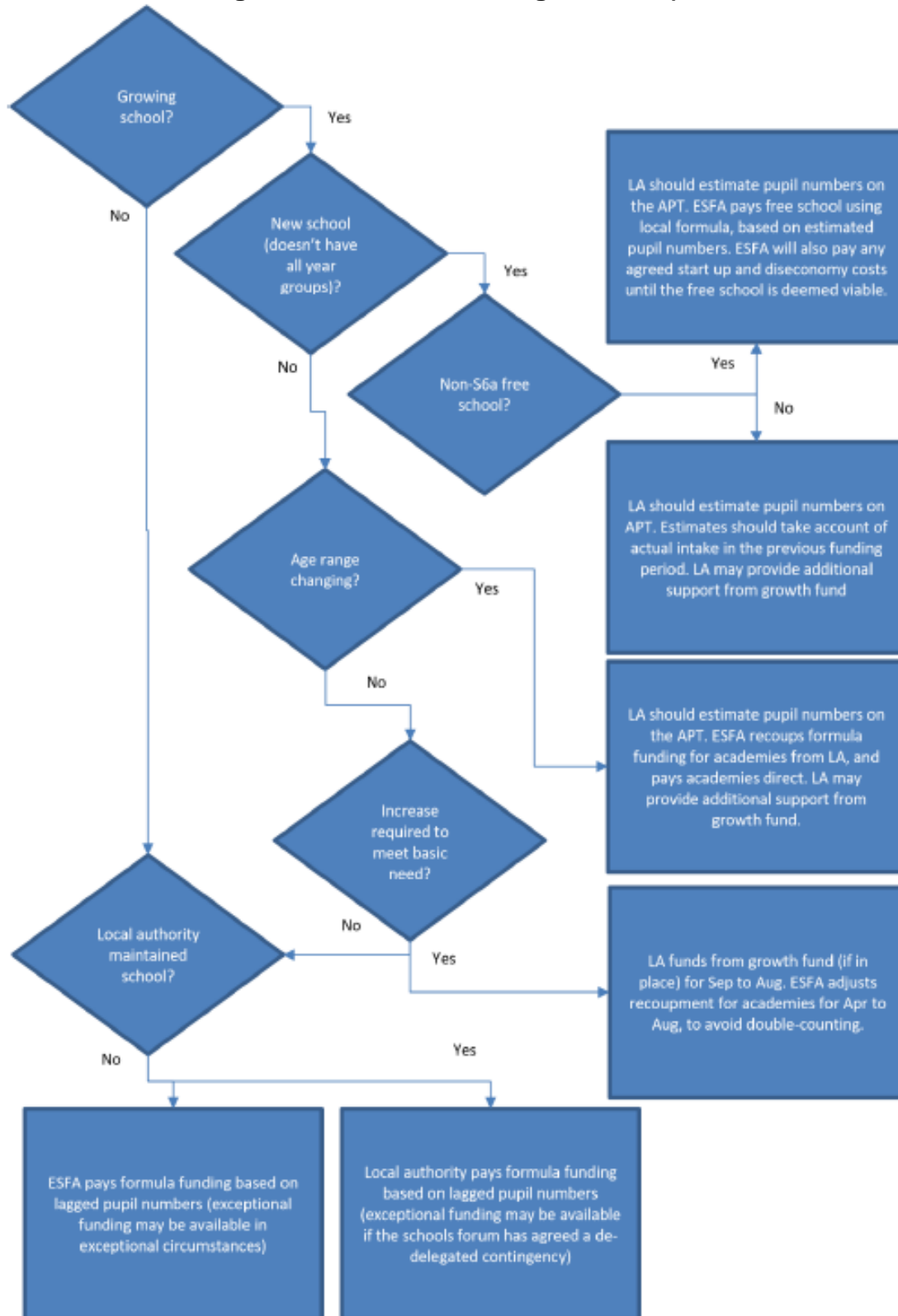
- 5.1 Where a new school is due to open, the regulations require that LAs should estimate the pupil numbers expected to join the school in September and fund accordingly, explaining the rationale underpinning the estimates. Under these regulations, LAs should estimate pupil numbers for all schools and academies, including free schools, where they have opened in the previous seven years, and are still adding year groups. LAs can adjust estimates each year, to take account of the actual pupil numbers in the previous funding period. For academies an allocation of funding is recouped from each LA and, following formula replication by the EFSA, an annual grant allocated.
- 5.2 There is an increasing requirement from the DfE/ESFA to guarantee / underwrite pupil numbers for new schools planned to be opened in future years. Although this is effectively the approach already applied for new schools, it does increase the risk should actual pupil numbers not reflect the current forecasts.
- 5.3 Due to the way in which schools funding is allocated from the DfE on a lagged basis (including additional funding for growth) this results in the existing schools within the county effectively having to subsidise all new schools whilst they fill to capacity and move to being funded on actual numbers. Therefore, the greater the differential between the actual numbers on roll at new schools as at the October Census and the guaranteed number to be funded, the greater the required subsidy and impact on all other schools.
- 5.4 Current practice has been to open new schools on the following basis:
- Primary schools – guaranteed funding for a minimum of 30 or 60 pupils in the first year of opening dependent on whether they are opening from reception up or for all year groups.
 - Secondary schools – guaranteed funding based on the planned capacity **only** if the initial pupil forecasts support this. For example, a 4FE secondary school with forecast numbers of between 90 and 120 in year 1 would be funded for 120 guaranteed places. If the forecast numbers are below 90 the guaranteed number would be adjusted to reflect the closest multiple of 30.
 - Guaranteed pupil numbers for the second year of operation onwards have been based on actual and forecast numbers following annual discussions.
- 5.5 The DfE have recently consulted on the future arrangements for the National Funding Formula – Fair funding for all. As part of this consultation funding for growth and new schools is under review with proposals to change the way in which this funding is allocated, including the funding of start-up costs. *“We propose that, when a hard NFF is implemented, funding for growth, new and growing schools, and falling rolls will still be allocated, as these will all continue to be important parts of the lagged funding system. However, the method through which this funding is allocated should change – moving to a new, national approach.”* Until this new approach is confirmed the LA are unable to provide any long-term commitments to funding arrangements as they will be subject to the outcomes of the national policy changes.
- 5.6 Alongside the main formula funding, pre-opening costs and diseconomies funding in respect of new basic need academies are also payable from the Growth Fund. Details of the current amounts payable can be found in the New Schools Funding Policy (**Appendix 2b**), which is also subject to approval on an annual basis.

- 5.7 This funding must be made available to new basic need academies on the same basis as maintained schools, including those funded on estimates – the only exception is that the ESFA will continue to fund start-up and diseconomy costs for new free schools where they are not being opened to meet an identified basic need requirement as referred to in section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

6.0 AMENDMENTS TO FUNDING CRITERIA

- 6.1 It is possible to amend the above Growth Fund criteria during the year where this becomes necessary; however, the revised criteria must be submitted to the ESFA for compliance checking and must also be approved by Schools Forum before the revised criteria can be implemented.

Appendix 2a – Funding Flow Chart for Growing Schools (from EFSA Guidance)



Appendix 2b – New School Funding

Pre-Opening Funding for New Schools

The pre-opening funding is intended to cover all revenue costs up to the opening of the school. Capital costs to secure and develop the school's site, and ICT to support the curriculum, are funded separately for the LA's five year rolling programme of capital investment. Books and other curriculum materials may be purchased before opening, using an advance of the post-opening diseconomies funding.

The pre-opening funding is to cover:

- project management (support to coordinate all work leading to the development of the school);
- staff recruitment (including the Head teacher/Principal);
- salary costs (which often include the Head teacher/Principal, Finance/Business Manager and administrative support in advance of opening);
- office costs.

Primary Schools - funding is calculated on the basis of 1 term prior to the date of opening.

Secondary Schools - funding is calculated on the basis of 2 terms prior to the date of opening.

Special Schools - funding is calculated on the basis of 2 terms prior to the date of opening.

In all instances the funding can be accessed earlier on request, but the total amount to be received remains as detailed below.

Primary	£50,000
Secondary	£150,000
Special	£130,000

Post-Opening Diseconomies Funding

Resources –

Paid annually as the school builds up to capacity –

- £125 for each new mainstream place created in the primary phase (years R to 6)
- £500 for each new mainstream place created in the secondary phase (years 7 to 13)

New places will be calculated annually based on the increases in roll from year to year.

Leadership –

Paid annually based on the number of year-groups that the school will ultimately have. The amount paid to mainstream schools with pupils aged 4 – 15 each year is set out below:

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Primary	£40,250	£33,750	£27,000	£20,250	£13,500	£6,250	£141,500
Secondary	£125,000	£93,500	£62,500	£31,000			£312,000