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# **Briefing Note**

**Growth and Falling Pupil Fund**

**Background**

**Growth Fund**

Local Authorities are permitted to retain funding to support Primary and Secondary schools (including Academies and Free Schools) with significant in-year growth in pupil numbers from Reception to year 11. Pupil number growth arises from two key sources: increased birth rates and in-year net migration into the City’s schools. None of the Growth Fund is retained or used by the LA for any other purposes.

**Falling Pupil Fund**

LAs are also able to top slice the DSG to create a small fund to support good schools with falling rolls where local planning data shows that surplus places will be required within the next three financial years.

The funding amount and criteria for both Growth and Falling Pupil funds must be agreed by Schools Forum in accordance with criteria set by the Department for Education.

Whilst Schools Forum can alter the criteria to accommodate local needs, changes to any mandatory criterion requires DfE consent.

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**Update**

* In the last two years we have seen a change in our requirements for additional primary school places due to falling birth rates and significant change in migration trends with fewer pupils arriving in the city and more pupils leaving.
* This fall in primary numbers has impacted the level of Growth funding we receive from the DfE significantly. Given that our growth is now in the secondary sector, where pupil rates are higher, this makes it increasingly challenging to meet our year on year commitment to fund additional places.
* In addition, a number of schools that do not currently qualify for Falling Pupil fund have approached the LA and the DfE to reconsider the eligibility criteria to include schools who are judged less than Good. In previous years we have been able to estimate our requirements for Growth and Falling Pupil funds using our pupil forecast with a degree of accuracy. The number of current variables leads to the need for a more robust review of the current criterion and funding request.
* We are proposing to use October 2021 census data (received this week) to model our requirements for Growth and Falling Pupil fund for the financial year 2022/23.
* The modelling will take into consideration the impact of introducing changes to the eligibility criteria for Falling Pupil fund.

**Next Steps**

* Technical Group to be reinstated.
* Model financial requirements for 2022/23 Growth and Falling Pupil funds in consultation with the Technical Group.
* Present requirements and any proposed changes to the criteria to the Forum at the next (Jan 2022) meeting in lieu of the APT return, setting out clearly the process that needs to be followed to implement changes to the criteria.