

## REPORT FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

1.	<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> September 2024</b>
2.	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Growth Fund Policy</b>
3.	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Finance and Customer Services</b>

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the changes introduced by the DfE for the administration and distribution of growth funding by local authorities.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the schools forum note the changes introduced by the DfE and approve the local growth policy to be adopted for Rotherham.

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION & CONTEXT

- 3.1 The growth fund is intended to address shortage of school places in the short term where local authorities are responsible for funding growth needs in their area for maintained schools and academies.

- 3.2 In 2024/25 more stringent guidelines were introduced by the DfE for the administration and distribution of growth funding by local authorities.

- 3.3 The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) now specifies that the growth fund can only be used to:

- Support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to address basic need.
- Support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation.
- Meet the revenue cost of new schools.
- Meet the revenue costs, for schools related to removing or repurposing surplus places.
- Local authorities must provide growth funding when a school or academy provides extra places because of a request from the council to establish an extra class (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment).

- 3.4 The guidelines explicitly highlight that 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.
  - Schools that are admitting pupils within their existing PAN and simply 'filling up' back to capacity
  - Nursery and/or post-16/sixth form education
- 3.5 Local authorities are still expected to have local growth funding policies. It is not a requirement that spending on growth will necessarily match precisely the funding allocated to Rotherham for growth, and we continue to have the ability to locally 'top-slice' our overall Schools Block funding to fund pupil growth numbers.
- 3.6 The proposed Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Growth Policy is included as an appendix for approval of the schools forum.

#### **4. NAMES & CONTACT DETAILS**

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