

Primary Schools Falling Rolls

Key Messages

Forum members are asked to:

- Note the process to manage the impact of falling primary rolls in the city.
- Discuss and agree the principles that underpin the Falling Roll Policy and for developing a package of support for those schools identifying as encountering financial difficulties due to falling rolls.
- Agree the allocation of £250k from the anticipated underspend of the 2020/21 Growth budget to be allocated to the Falling Rolls Fund for 2021/22.

1. Introduction/background

- 1.1. The number of births in Sheffield has been falling since 2012. This has resulted in a growing number of surplus places in primary schools and the expectation is that this trend will continue for the next few years.
- 1.2. Falling rolls across the city mean more schools are now experiencing funding issues. These issues are generated by the difficulties of reducing staffing and the awkward year group sizes arising from schools not admitting year groups close to their Pupil Admission Number (PAN).
- 1.3. A financial support package is being recommended for some schools that have Ofsted categories of Good or Outstanding and are experiencing falling rolls. This will form part of a proposed approach to supporting schools facing this challenge. We are also recommending supporting some schools categorised as Requiring Improvement under certain strict criteria.
- 1.4. The fund would be underpinned by a policy which is balanced and equitable, supports a whole schools partnership approach and enables families to continue to access quality education in their area. We will work with the Funding Working Group to clarify and refine the policy, and share it with the Forum at a subsequent meeting.

2. The principles

- 2.1. The report agreed by the Schools Forum in September, described the initial RAG rating used to identify some schools which may need support with falling rolls. We are also aware of schools where falling rolls have made their class structures easier to manage, resulting in them not experiencing any difficulties and not requiring additional support.
- 2.2. Additionally, we are aware of schools that have multiple year groups with awkward year groups, but the % below PAN isn't identifying them. For that reason, we are not proposing using a purely formulaic approach to

identifying schools eligible for support. Schools not identified by the RAG rating can also apply for support.

- 2.3. part of the approach to supporting schools with a falling roll. Other methods of support will also include:
- Consideration of either a temporary or permanent adjustment of the school's PAN.
 - Forming part of a review of over capacity of places in an area of the city.
 - Supporting budget planning
 - Recommending work with a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).
- 2.4. Schools will need to apply for the support, in writing, prior to November.
- 2.5. Additional financial support will not be given in all circumstances. It will only be considered if schools have taken proactive action to manage staffing and financial changes. Schools will also need to first use their existing financial reserves. If it is agreed that following a thorough review of the application by panel (officers plus two Forum members), that the school should receive financial support the formula is:
- the shortfall in pupil numbers * 1/30th of a main scale 5 teacher, up to the maximum of 1 FTE main scale teacher.*
- 2.6. Financial support will only be available for a maximum of three academic years.
- 2.7. The funding regulations allow local authorities to have a contingency for falling rolls where a school is classified as Good or Outstanding. The Schools Forum is asked to consider allowing schools who do not meet this criteria (i.e. Requires Improvement), but can demonstrate considerable improvements since the inspection through their action plan, to access the same package of support. This would need to be monitored as Ofsted inspections have been adjusted/delayed in light of Covid-19.
- 2.8. Under the current RAG rating, two schools in the red category and five schools in amber have Requires Improvement rating.

3. Recommendations

Forum members are asked to:

- Agree to a £250k budget for falling rolls from the rolled forward underspend from the 2020/21 Growth budget.
- Agree to support schools that meet the criteria.
- Discuss and agree the principles that underpin the Falling Roll Policy.