

Report for Schools Forum

Service Area:	Learning and Early Support / Schools Finance
Presented By:	Martin Wilby / David Baxter
Report:	Growth Fund for 2025/26
Date:	10 January 2025
Purpose Of Report:	To provide Schools Forum with information required to agree the level of Growth Fund for 2025/26
Is a Decision Required?	Yes
Decision context	Schools Forum are responsible setting central spend on and the criteria for allocating growth funding.

Growth Funding

A Dedicated School Grant Central Budget Retention [for mainstream maintained schools and academies] has been agreed by Schools Forum for Growth funding for several years:

Growth funding within the Schools Block

Budget provision	£	Notes
Pupil Growth Fund	600,000	Support in the KS1 primary school phase as per agreed principles and criteria.
Future pupil growth	600,000	Support for normal round bulge classes and permanent expansion as per agreed principles and criteria [current support is focused on bulge classes in the secondary school phase]
TOTAL	£1,200,000	

It is worth noting that the value of this budget has not changed over the years with inflation or changes in funding for schools. For example, secondary AWPU in 2019/20, the first year of funding bulge places, was £3,863 compared to £5,033 in 2024/25, an increase of 30%. The point being there is a real-terms reduction in this budget every year.

Future pupil growth (currently used for secondary school bulge places)

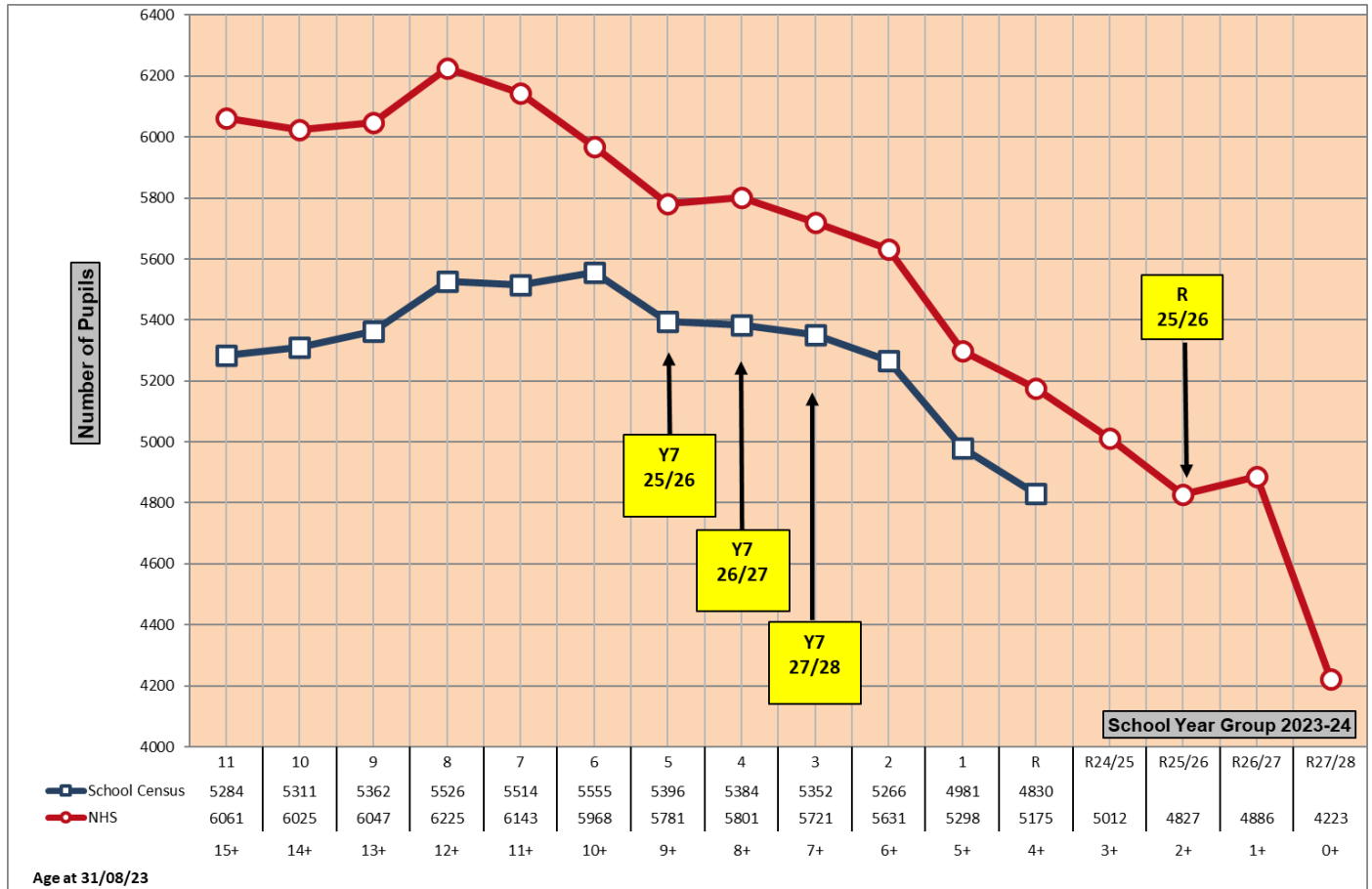
An update was last shared with Schools Forum in June 2024 which suggested the Future Growth Fund element for 2024 would likely just be within the 2024-2025 budget although there would remain some uncertainty until October 2024 Census was available. The report also stated that a maximum of £185K of commitments had already been made in the lead up to National Offer Day 2024 for the summer term 2024/25 which would fall into the financial year 2025/26.

Following confirmation of October Census 2024 a more accurate position can be confirmed. The Future Growth Fund will likely underspend by approximately £100K in 2024/25 and the future commitment for 2025/26 is approximately £100k (rather than the £185K maximum previously shared).

Predicting the required Growth Funding beyond this time to support the required secondary phase bulge classes is far from an exact science. However, some indicators are available from population and school census data. Chart 1 in the Kirklees School Place Planning Document provides the Kirklees level overview of these key data sets:

Chart 1: Year Group Numbers 2023-24 – NHS Data and Kirklees School Pupil Census

Sources: NHS GP registration data October 2023 - NHS Digital
 Kirklees School Census January 2024 – Data & Insight, Public Health & Corporate Resources directorate



Alongside the data set we have a history of the secondary school bulge places required over time:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TOTAL	130	210	178	193	230	152

As we move past the peak of demand for Year 7 places the number of required bulge places has started to reduce meaning less spend is required from the Future Growth Fund. An exact correlation between the reduction in bulge places and population data or the school census could not be found. The number of bulge places reduced by on average of 44% of change in these data sets between 2023/24 and 2024/25.

If the same conversion rate was applied to the period 2024/25 to 2025/26 there would likely be a requirement for 78 bulge places. This can be further reduced by 30 places as by 2025/26 as 5 full year groups will have received Future Growth Funding at North Huddersfield Trust resulting in no further lag funding gap and therefore no longer a requirement for further pupil funding outside the normal funding formula.

In addition to the Year 7 bulge places we are likely to require a further 24 bulge places in Y9, within the three tier system.

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The cost of supporting 72 (48+24) bulge places for autumn 2025 and spring 2025 is likely to cost approximately £222K on top of the £100K commitment already made, which means a theoretical budget of £322K could be sufficient for 2025/26 financial year.

However, this is only an indicator and cost could increase due to further in-year pupil migration into Kirklees. A minimum budget of £450K may be a more prudent position to take.

This is because the risk of not having sufficient funds to support bulge places could result secondary schools refusing to accept unfunded pupils, leading to a breach of the council's statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places.

Pupil Growth Fund (Mainly used in KS1, primary phase)

Historic spend has been as follows:

Pupil Growth Fund allocations 2023-2024	
School	Allocation
Birkby I & N	£59,911
Clough Head	£23,308
Denby Dale F & N	£36,855
Hinchliffe Mill	£41,952
Holmfirth JIN	£31,296
Kirkburton First	£15,544
Lydgate J & I	£27,958
Marsden I & N	£59,060
Oak Primary	£10,177
Paddock JIN	£25,961
Pentland	£3,328
Roberttown	£35,947
Savile Town	£24,411
Scholes J & I	£42,399
Wellhouse	£21,088
Wilberlee	£22,638
Total	£481,833

KS1 class size rules continue to apply. With falling numbers, budgets in the primary phase continue to be under significant pressure meaning this support is vital.

After taking account of October 204 census data, £600K is considered to remain a realistic budget in 2025/2026.

The risk of withdrawing this support is an increase in sustainability pressures in the primary phase which is likely to compromise learning outcomes.

With a degree of risk, it would be possible to set a Growth Fund for 2025/26 at £1,05M although it should be noted that the £3.6m Block Transfer remains achievable with a continuation a £1.2M budget in line with previous years.