

Report to: East Sussex Schools Forum

Date of meeting: 16 January 2026

Report By: Gary Langford, Senior Manager School Organisation

Title: Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund

Purpose: To update Schools Forum on expenditure in the 2025/26 financial year and to seek approval for funding in the 2026/27 financial year.

Recommendation:
Schools Forum is asked to approve an allocation of £958,100 for the 2026/27 Growth Fund.

1. Growth Fund

1.1 The Growth Fund supports maintained and non-maintained mainstream schools which are required to provide additional places to meet demand in their area. Funding is provided for:

- Key Stage 1 top-up: paid to schools to enable them to comply with Key Stage 1 class size legislation, which sets a maximum class size of 30 pupils with one teacher. There are a few exceptions where class sizes can exceed 30, but there is no entitlement to Growth Fund, for example, arising from admissions through the Fair Access Protocol.
- Additional classes: where the local authority has made a formal request for a school to set up one or more additional classes or requests a permanent increase in a school's Published Admission Number.
- New school funding: when new schools open in a local authority area, they receive pre-opening funding through a formula to cover costs incurred prior to the opening and diseconomy funding to cover costs incurred while the school fills to capacity. The funding decreases year on year as more year groups in the new school are admitted.

Growth Fund 2025/26

1.2 The Growth Fund budget for 2025/26 is £1,012,300. The budget was based on estimated Key Stage 1 pupil numbers and the predicted additional classes required for the 2025/26 academic year.

1.3 The number of schools eligible for either Key Stage 1 top-up funding or additional class funding is:

- 34 primary schools eligible for Key Stage 1 top-up funding
- 2 primary schools eligible for additional class funding
- 2 secondary schools eligible for additional class funding

1.4 To date, £952,058 has been spent in 2025/26. Appendix A provides a summary of the expenditure incurred. This leaves an unspent balance of £60,242. In addition, the local authority has received a Growth Fund rebate from the DfE of £124,869 relating to academy payments for the period April to August 2025. Therefore, the total remaining balance is £185,111. We propose giving this amount back to schools before the end of the financial year. Please see point 3.3 for details of the proposed rebate.

Growth Fund 2026/27

1.5 The proposed allocation for 2026/27 is based on the following assumptions:

- Key Stage 1 top-up funding: the October 2025 pupil numbers and the estimated Key Stage

1 numbers as in October 2026. A 10% contingency has been added to the top-up element to allow for any unforeseen changes.

- Additional class funding: the predicted need for places identified through the annual update to the pupil forecasting model, most recently updated in June 2025. A 10% contingency has been added to the additional class element to allow for any unanticipated pressures.
- The employee costs for teaching and non-teaching staff have been uplifted by recent pay awards.

1.6 It is currently estimated that the following numbers of schools will be eligible for Growth Fund support in 2026/27:

- 31 primary schools potentially eligible for Key Stage 1 top-up funding
- 1 primary school eligible for additional class funding
- 1 secondary school potentially eligible for additional class funding

1.7 The Growth Fund budget required in 2026/27 is £958,100. A breakdown of the Growth Fund calculation for 2026/27 is provided in Appendix B.

2. Falling Rolls Fund

2.1 The Falling Rolls Fund is used to support good or outstanding schools that have temporary, but significant, falling rolls, but where local planning data shows the places will be needed soon. It is designed to avoid the need for a school to restructure and then recruit again shortly afterwards. The funding is for maintained and non-maintained schools. The circumstances in which a payment is made from the Falling Rolls fund are:

- The school is judged to be good or outstanding at their last Ofsted inspection (this is a mandatory requirement from the DFE).
- The number on roll has dropped by more than 5% between the October 2024 census and the October 2025 census.
- Local planning data (East Sussex County Council pupil forecasting model) predicts that the number on roll will, in October 2027, be equal to or exceed their number on roll as in October 2024.

Falling Rolls Fund 2025/26

2.2 The Falling Rolls Fund budget for 2025/26 is £42,000. No schools qualify for the fund in this financial year, so we propose giving this amount back to schools before the end of the financial year.

Falling Rolls Fund 2026/27

2.3 Under the current criteria, no schools will qualify for the fund in 2026/27 financial year. As a result, we do not require any additional funding for the Falling Rolls Fund next year.

2.4 Given the increasing number of schools experiencing falling rolls, we propose reviewing the current eligibility criteria ahead of the 2027/28 financial year. We will report the outcome of the review to Schools Forum in January 2027.

3. Conclusion and recommendation

3.1 In conclusion, the report updates Schools Forum on Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund spending in the 2025/26 financial year and sets out the rationale for funding in 2026/27.

3.2 Accordingly, Schools Forum is recommended to approve an allocation of £958,100 for the 2026/27 Growth Fund.

3.3 As referenced in 1.4 and 2.2 above, we propose giving the combined 2025/26 Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund balance of £227,111 back to schools before the end of the financial year. The rebate will amount to £3.62 per pupil based on the October 2024 census.

Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund summary 2025/26

Key Stage 1 top-up funding	Amount
Alfriston School	£46,090
Hankham Primary School	£1,495
Laughton Community Primary School	£33,000
Park Mead Primary School	£9,877
Punnetts Town Community Primary School	£6,986
Westfield School	£6,986
Beckley Church of England Primary School	£26,271
Burwash C of E School	£9,877
St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Chailey	£36,180
Crowhurst C of E Primary School	£15,658
Danehill Church of England Primary School	£6,986
East Hoathly C of E Primary School	£21,315
Etchingham Church of England Primary School	£16,360
Fletching Church of England Primary School	£26,271
High Hurstwood Church of England Primary School	£31,225
Bonnors Church of England Primary School	£1,205
Peasmarsh Church of England Primary School	£36,180
Bodiam Church of England Primary School	£33,000
Staplecross Methodist Primary School	£12,767
St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School, Hartfield	£36,180
All Saints' and St Richard's Church of England Primary School	£41,135
Little Horsted Church of England Primary School	£30,110
Mark Cross Church of England Primary School	£51,045
St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Winchelsea	£21,315
High Cliff Academy	£12,767
The Baird Academy	£12,677
Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School	£9,877
Breakwater Academy	£16,806
Phoenix Academy	£41,548
Castledown Community Primary and Nursery School	£8,548
Oakwood Academy	£23,000
Ringmer Primary School	£33,000
St Andrew's Church of England Infants School, Eastbourne	£1,495
Annecy Catholic Primary School, Seaford	£9,877
TOTAL	£727,108

Additional Class Funding	Amount
Wivelsfield Primary	£38,950
Wallands Primary	£52,000
Willingdon Secondary School	£56,000
Hailsham Academy	£78,000
TOTAL	£224,950

Growth Fund Requirement 2026/27

Funding type	Funding required
Key Stage 1 top-up funding	£814,400
Additional class funding	£143,700
Total	£958,100