

# Falling Rolls Policy 2024-25

## For All Sheffield Primary Schools

### 1. Introduction/background

- 1.1. The policy was developed due to the number of births in Sheffield falling since 2012 which 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. The Falling Rolls Funding Policy for 2024-25 amounts to **£250,000**, as agreed at the December 2023 Schools Forum. Requests from schools for support will not necessarily result in any financial award.
- 1.3. Forecasts (currently available to 2026/27 academic year) suggest that the primary school population will continue to decline, and only a minority of the 136 primary schools will be unaffected. This Policy is to support schools to remain viable during this challenging period until demand increases towards the end of the decade.
- 1.4. The aim of this Policy is NOT to result in a school closure programme, but to work collaboratively with schools to help them become sustainable community primary schools, wherever practically possible.
- 1.5. This policy is subject to any forthcoming changes due to the full implementation of the National Funding Formula.

### 2. The principles

- 2.1. The principles are as follows:

- Support Good or Outstanding schools
- RAG Rated System used for information not qualification
- Schools not identified in RAG rating system can still apply
- Funding not based purely on a formulaic approach
- Support for falling rolls not limited to financial claims only
- Financial support is not an automatic right
- Schools need to apply in writing prior to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024
- Schools to apply annually for Falling Rolls Funding
- Maximum award available to schools is three academic years

### 3. Support for Schools

3.1. There are other methods of support available to schools which are NOT financial based, and these options will be considered for each school.

3.2. The Education & Childcare Commissioning Team (ECCT) have developed a programme of support for schools facing falling rolls. This includes:

- Forecasts for all schools are published on the Learn Sheffield Schools Data Hub annually; these schools are broken down by sub-planning area and provide a prediction for demand for each primary for the next 4 years which will support school leadership and governors' decision-making.
- Officers in Admissions and ECCT can provide advice and guidance for any statutory processes for significant change e.g. reducing PAN.
- Individual meetings offered to schools identified as 'Red' through RAG analysis of forecasts. This will provide an opportunity to discuss the data and consider options. (RAG analysis methodology considers a range of risk factors but primarily identifies schools with 30% surplus in reception year in forecast years). This process will be undertaken annually once the forecasts are produced (spring term).
- Forecasts and officer attendance on request to support local planning area / locality meetings where a collaborative approach is required.

3.3. Other methods of support will also include:

- Regular opportunities to share data with all schools.
- Review options with targeted schools, mainly in the Red category of the RAG rating system (these are schools that have met any agreed criteria set by the LA as schools requiring urgent support).
- 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. Officers can facilitate or contribute to discussions at locality / planning area level.
- Advice and support on federation, amalgamation or academisation process as appropriate.
- Supporting schools with budget planning.
- Recommending work with a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

### 4. Criteria for Claims Process for Additional Funding

4.1. Good or outstanding schools.

4.2. This policy is aimed at primary schools as it is the primary sector that is currently significantly affected as a whole.

- 4.3. Schools may attract falling rolls funding if they meet **ALL** the following requirements:
- 4.4. Support is available for schools identifying as encountering financial difficulties due to falling rolls.
- 4.5. Local planning data demonstrates that numbers at the school are expected to rise again within three years. Regular demographic forecasts are shared with the Sheffield Schools Forum.
- 4.6. Reduction in numbers on roll (NOR) is not the result of an agreed reduction in PAN i.e. some schools may have had temporary increased PAN's a few years previously and now that the expansion is coming to the end the PAN is being reduced again back down to what it previously was. These schools are not eligible to claim as they should have been planning staffing reductions accordingly.
- 4.7. Falling rolls is not the result of bulge classes passing through a school.
- 4.8. School has taken action to manage the impact of falling rolls e.g. worked with the LA to reduce its PAN where this is deemed an appropriate solution.

## 5. Pupil Number Criteria

- 5.1. Schools need to have met ANY of the following criteria to be eligible to apply for support under the Falling Rolls Policy, but this wouldn't necessarily result in financial support being offered:
  - Schools of less than 3FE are experiencing reductions on roll of more than 10% of the whole school PAN capacity, as agreed with the Local Authority. We would expect larger 3FE schools to be able to absorb costs below this threshold; or
  - schools less than 1.5 FE who are experiencing reductions of 5% or more in Numbers on Roll (NOR whole school) based on one autumn census to the next one, or
  - changes in pupil numbers are having a significant negative financial impact on the schools that are fragile. i.e. small schools.

## 6. Financial Criteria

- 6.1. Schools would only warrant financial support if they can meet ALL of the following criteria:
  - Schools will be expected to cover any temporary funding shortfall from their existing carry forward balances prior to application to the Falling Rolls Funding policy, LA maintained schools and academies must provide their latest forecast outturn report, signed off either by the Head Teacher for LA maintained schools or Trustees for academies.

- There has been a reduction in the school budget share as published in Section 251 Budget Statement or the Schools Block GAG allocation of 3% in cash terms or more from the previous financial or academic year.
- The school's closing reserves should not exceed 5% of their published budget share allocation as in Section 251 Budget Statement or the Schools Block GAG allocation. For academy schools full Primary Trust balances will be considered and must not exceed 5%. These must be signed off by either the LA maintained school Head Teacher or Trustees of academies.
- Schools are NOT receiving financial support through the existing growth fund. No funding will be paid where schools are already being supported via this method.
- Schools should submit details of how the funding will be deployed via the headteacher.

## 7. Methodology for distributing funding

7.1. Funding will be awarded using the following formula:

the shortfall in pupil numbers \* 1/30th of a main scale 5 teacher, up to the maximum of 1 FTE main scale teacher.

7.2. **Once the fund is exhausted, no further allocations will be made.** This will be tied in with the result of the Moderation Panel outcomes for all payment decisions made.

## 8. Claims Process

8.1. The Policy will be reviewed and published on an annual basis on the SCC website.

8.2. Schools should apply in writing, with all supporting evidence, to the Strategy & Commissioning Team before the deadline of 30th November of the current financial year. Schools should indicate which category of criteria they are claiming against:

- A school of 1.5 FE or more are experiencing reductions on roll of more than 10% of whole school PAN capacity, or
- A school less than 1.5 FE who are experiencing reductions of 5% or more in Numbers on Roll (NOR whole school), or
- changes in pupil numbers are having a significant negative financial impact.

8.3. Applications should be made, complete with the evidence required, in the first instance, to [Richard.hudson@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.hudson@sheffield.gov.uk)

- 8.4. If schools are claiming financial support then the evidence required IN FULL is as follows:
- A breakdown of current and forecast Census information showing year groups Reception to Y6.
  - Latest forecast outturn report signed off either by the Head Teacher for LA maintained schools or Trustees for academies.
  - Copy of Budget Share statement or GAG Statement for academies for the current and previous financial year/academic year. To demonstrate a reduction in the school budget share or GAG allocation of 3% in cash terms or more from previous FY/AY.
  - Closing reserves statement signed off by either the LA maintained school Head Teacher or Trustees of academies. To demonstrate balances, or in the case of an academy full Primary trust balances will not exceed 5% of their budget share or GAG allocation, and to agree to the sharing of the school's financial data with the members of the moderation panel.
  - A statement signed by the Head Teacher showing how the funding would be deployed if awarded.
- 8.5. Schools' supporting evidence is to be supplied at the very latest by the 31st of December, if evidence is not received the claim will become null and void for that financial year. The LA will not chase schools for evidence, the onus will be on the school to comply and supply evidence in full by the deadline.
- 8.6. The Schools Resourcing Team will work with the Education and Childcare Commissioning Team to triage the claim and subsequently recommend the relevant support to be provided, either
- strategic non-financial;
  - strategic and financial; or
  - purely financial.
- 8.7. Once officers have triaged claims, and if it is recommended that financial support is warranted, the Strategy & Commissioning Team will calculate the value of the claim. All claims will be held in readiness for submission to the Moderation Panel.
- 8.8. All claims will be presented to the Moderation Panel, who will assess all claims for the year and will approve recommended actions accordingly including the method of payment.
- 8.9. Payments for schools to be made on a financial year basis: 7/12ths covering the period September to March; 5/12ths covering the period April to August.
- 8.10. The LA will work with Head Teachers to keep them informed and share any updates with them on a regular basis relating to all payments made and any further remedial action being taken.

8.11. A flow chart has been produced to show the process in full. See Appendix 5.

## 9. Moderation

- 9.1. The purpose of the Moderation Panel will be to consider applications received, following triage by officers, to note the recommendations made by officers of the type and level of support to be awarded, and to approve any recommended financial award.
- 9.2. The Moderation Panel will consist of Officers from the Local Authority, Head Teachers, Governors and Senior Finance Staff, both representative of maintained schools and academies.
- 9.3. The members of the moderation panel will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement, as schools will be submitting confidential financial data which should not be disclosed outside the panel.
- 9.4. The Moderation Panel will meet on a quarterly basis, in June, September, December and March, to discuss and approve financial recommendations for claims.
- 9.5. The Moderation Panel will be responsible for financial approvals and will be kept informed throughout the year to ensure other recommended actions are carried out.
- 9.6. An annual report will be produced following the year end to the Education Funding Forum showing all payments made and any remedial action taken.

## 10. Further Information/Queries

- 10.1. Schools should initially direct any queries to the Strategy & Commissioning Team, Schools Resourcing Team: [Richard.hudson@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.hudson@sheffield.gov.uk)
- 10.2. If queries relate to other support available, that is not purely financial, then schools should contact [schoolreorganisation@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:schoolreorganisation@sheffield.gov.uk).