

Falling Rolls Fund – Item 3.10/3.11

It is essential that an appropriate mechanism is introduced that enables schools who are experiencing depleted pupil numbers to be funded enough that enables them to operate pending the arrival of anticipated growth in pupil numbers in future years. The suggestion of a formula that enables the gap in Published Admission Number and actual number in that year group to be used is an obvious approach. However, this has several critical failings that mean that it will be fraught with difficulties to administer and open to abuse. Some key examples are listed below:

- The first and most obvious problem that this raises is that the law enables a school to raise its PAN at any time even if it is not full. Consequently, any school could, without consultation, simply choose to increase its PAN by however many forms of entry it wishes and in the absence of pupils collect additional funding for its empty places.
- It is also the case that the PAN only relates to the normal point of entry to the school, later year groups can be flexed in anyway the school sees fit – although we would expect the PAN for that year to follow its way through the school – but this is not always the case.
- Some schools are asked to take a bulge year without formally increasing the PAN this could leave them with significant financial shortfalls if that bulge class is no longer needed in later years and numbers have dropped back down (perhaps with the opening of a new school).

There are so many external factors that will impact the financial viability of a school, some of these can be mitigated by reorganisations within the school, others might be restricting numbers in other schools where possible or indeed by the popularity of other schools waning whilst improvements are made in the school struggling for numbers. These decisions need the oversight of education experts who understand the local demographic and contextual information and Local Authorities remain best placed to take these decisions about financial support.

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