Greenshaw High School response to the decision to withdraw growth funding from 2017-18

Introduction
Having considered the Forum minutes (8/12/2016) we recognise the need for savings, and we also recognise that all parts of the education system are currently under unprecedented financial pressures. However, we feel that the model approved by Forum negatively affects schools that offered additional provision, and it is incumbent that all schools make good potential DSG shortfalls.

We urge the Schools Forum to consider making some form of transitional arrangement for schools that are expanding with multiple additional classes of entry. Removing any expansion funding for schools with multiple classes of expansion will have a huge impact on their existing three-year budget plans.

To reduce growth funding to zero with no form of protection, unlike the proposed model of tapered funding in years 2 and 3, with only eight months of notice, presents insurmountable difficulties. Several expansion associated staffing decisions have already been implemented, and will see Greenshaw High School considering redundancies.

Context
Greenshaw is a highly popular school, and has continued to be so in the most recent round of applications for September 2017 admissions. We enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to expand, as this would enable more local families to be part of our school. We made this decision on the basis that we would receive up front funding for each expanded cohort, year by year.

Due to changes to national funding in 2016-17 (that Forum members will be entirely aware of), the school carried out a re-structure last academic year. This led to the loss of 14 roles across the school, and we were forced to reduce the working hours of a further 11 roles. This sees us currently operating on the absolute minimum level of staffing.

The business model that formed the backdrop for this restructure was one that contained annual expansion funding, going forwards. Without expansion funding, further redundancies would make delivering the education of the additional students close to impossible, and certainly negatively impact on the quality of their experience. This late change will also impact on the wider school, as we have budgeted and staffed on the agreed model.

We were forced to make tough decisions last year, but in the knowledge that expansion funding would allow us to make good on short term changes. Many of these (assumed to be) short term changes affected the provision for our most vulnerable students, with a reduction in SEN and Inclusion posts. The removal of expansion funding, at a loss of £640,000 over the next four years means that far from being a temporary element, the under resourcing of our school will become a permanent feature, and hit our most vulnerable students.

Effect of removal of growth funding with immediate effect
The £160,000 loss of funding next year will put the school at risk of a second re-structure in consecutive years. This, with the loss of the ESG, alongside the Apprenticeship Levy, comes to over a £300,000 shortfall in funding. Our re-structured budget allowed for some contingency, and we may have been able to accommodate some elements of these changes, but not all.

In addition to having to meet the cost of additional teaching staff for sixty students without upfront expansion funding, the school will need to pay for further services for those students who have SEN or would attract PP funding from September 2017. This additional cost will need to come from the per pupil funding for students in Year 8 and upwards. This cost was not included in the initial proposal that considered reducing expansion funding to £51,000, the equivalent cost of an M3 teacher on-costs. It is our view that the £51,000 represents a significant underestimation of the real per class cost.

Proposal
We would urge the Sutton Schools Forum to consider that expansion funding for schools with multiple additional forms of entry be adopted, even if tapered in years 2 & 3. Such a decision would give schools some lead time to properly plan the impact of this significant reduction in future years, and ensure that the effects of these reductions on youngsters’ education can be ameliorated.

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Sue Wood (Chair of Governors) Nick House (Headteacher)