**Where we are**

Due to excessive demand for school places in Central Sutton, Westbourne agreed to support the LA and other local central Sutton schools by taking a bulge class in September 2016. Looking at the projected pupil numbers it could be seen that the basic need for places was going to remain particularly high in the coming years in this locality. After discussions with the LA the school agreed to look into expanding to 3FE to help alleviate the problem. The expansion project was promised funding for both the physical building through Capital finance and revenue support through the Growth Fund. With these assurances in place the Governing Body of the Academy agreed to commit to the project.

**Process**

As with any expansion project a period of consultation was carried out allowing stakeholders to raise any concerns. Funding was a concern but in the public meeting our parents were reassured by the LA that the project would be fully funded and there would be no negative impact on the present pupils. This meeting took place in early July. The project and funding was then approved by the PFE committee in late September. Less than 4 months later this commitment by the LA was withdrawn.

In addition to the consultation process as an Academy we had to complete an application of ‘Significant Change’ to the EFA for their approval. Again we stated in the required 5 year projection plan that the expansion would be fully funded and no concerns were raised.

**Growth Funding**

The 80k funding per year that we agreed to manage the project on is already £866 per pupil less than the ‘Basic Entitlement’, leaving a shortfall of £25,960 by the end of the first year. Our budget as an academy runs from September to August, meaning Westbourne would not receive any funding for the additional 30 children during their first year of education. The gap in this shortfall will never be closed. In starting a new class every year for the next 5 years there is a minimum of a new teacher and teaching assistant required. The schools management team will need to grow to support the increase of pupil and staff numbers. Neither of these essential elements can be delivered without appropriate funding. There is simply no ‘headroom’ to use from the funding to maintain the outstanding education expected by the parents, governors, LA and not least the DfE. As a result there will be a negative impact on the existing pupils. Something we promised, with the backing of the LA, would not happen.

**Conclusion**

Westbourne entered into an agreement with the LA to support them in their statutory responsibility to provide pupil places in the locality where the demand is at its highest. We were under no obligation as an Academy to do so but we felt it would alleviate pressures on other local schools. In offering this support we seem to be being financially penalised twice through growth funding and budget cuts.

**Moving Forward**

We realise that there are major cuts needed in funding across the LA to reduce the DSG overspend but feel that it is unfair to change the goal posts in an agreement which was set only 6 months ago. It is only reasonable that the arrangement which was offered to us remains and any changes are put in place take effect from this point forward.