

Vulnerable Children's Grant

Report being considered by: Schools' Forum on 21st June 2021

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Item for: Information **By:** All Forum Members

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 Review of Vulnerable Children's Fund 2020/2021

Will the recommendation require the matter to be referred to the Council or the Executive for final determination?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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2. Introduction/Background

- 2.1 The Vulnerable Children's Grant (VCG) is a highly appreciated, relatively small fund, for schools who have unexpected additional financial pressures due to in-year admissions or where children's needs have dramatically increased (e.g. due to a new medical condition, a crisis in the home). It is specifically devised to promote social inclusion, reduce exclusions and reduce the pressure on SEN budgets by providing temporary funding.

3. Supporting Information

- 3.1 The budget for 2020-2021 was £50,000.
- 3.2 This period covered three national lockdowns due to the Covid 19 pandemic. From March 2020, schools were only open to children considered vulnerable and children of key worker parents. Between March 2020 – July 2020, no VCG requests were received. There was a steady flow of applications for the rest of the financial year, despite the second school closure between January and March 2021.

The table below explains that 56 children and young people were supported through this grant, with most applications being received from primary schools. As with previous years, most applications (84%) requested funds to support through use of a TA, though a small number (16%) required funds to buy equipment for pupils. Only four applications were refused with this either being due to a second request (where the VCG is meant to provide a one-off payment) or because the pupils' needs could have been predicted and therefore not considered to be in need of emergency funding.

Number of settings accessing the grant	27 (1 Early Years, 22 Primary, 4 Secondary)
Number of children supported through the grant	56

Children's primary need	73% Social Emotional and Mental Health 25% Learning <1% Medical
Number of applications refused	4
Type of financial support	84% TA support 16% Equipment
Total spend	£49955

Schools who received funds were invited to provide feedback through a survey monkey questionnaire – 60% of schools provided feedback.

Schools reported the following in terms of progress made by pupils:

A lot of progress	24%
Some progress	57%
No progress – stayed the same	10%
No progress – got worse	9%

The VCG appears to be impactful, such that most pupils make some or a lot of progress. Themes that emerged highlighted how the TA enabled a pupil's inclusion through:

- Modelling of strategies to support emotional regulation
- Running intervention programmes
- Using strategies and interventions as recommended by outside agencies

This also meant that:

- Exclusions and a reduced timetable were less necessary
- Incidents by the pupil reduced
- The pupil could remain in class for longer
- The pupil was more likely to access the curriculum and academic tasks
- The pupil could access a 'small garden' (often a provision outside of the class)
- Staff had a better understanding of the need and level of support that a pupil required

54% of responses indicated that staff were still worried about the pupil's needs and amount of progress. Reasons for this included:

- Current and possible future impact of the pandemic and lockdowns on the pupil
- Pupils were likely to have complex and long-term needs that could require an Education and Health Care Plan.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The VCG aims to be fair, equitable and simple to request. Feedback from schools indicates that it is valued and has significant impact.

5. Consultation and Engagement

All settings who received funding were asked to complete a survey monkey questionnaire about the impact of the funds. 60% of schools in receipt of VCG completed the survey.