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# Vulnerable Children's Grant 2023-2024

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**Report being considered by:** Schools' Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

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

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 Review of Vulnerable Children's Fund 2023/2024

## 2. Recommendation

1.1 That Forum Members note the report.

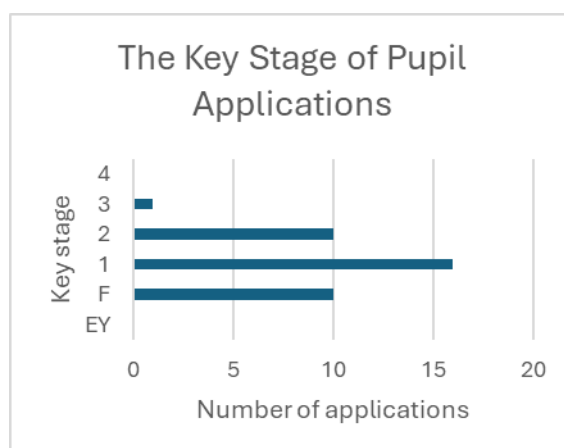
## 3. Introduction/Background

3.1 The Vulnerable Children's Grant (VCG) is a relatively small fund for schools who have unexpected additional financial pressures due to in-year admissions of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or for children whose needs suddenly change. It is specifically devised to promote social inclusion, reduce exclusions and reduce the pressure on SEN budgets by providing temporary funding.

## 4. Supporting Information

4.1 The VCG budget for 2023-2024 was £67,000

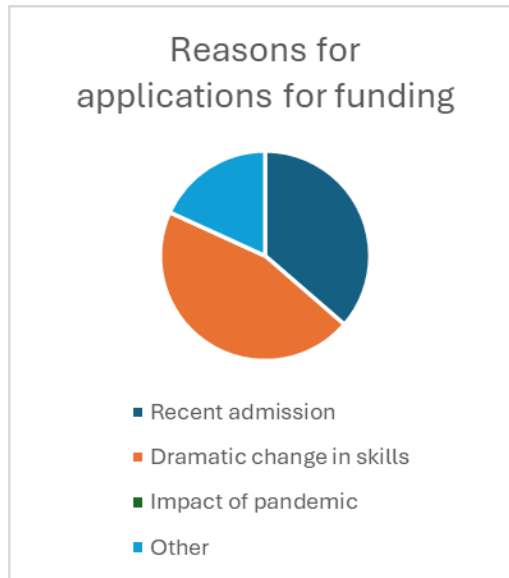
4.2 27 settings successfully applied for VCG funding for 54 pupils. The vast majority of applications were received from primary schools, with most supported requested for pupils in key stage 1.



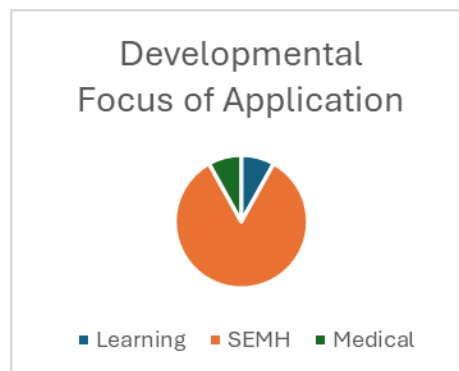
Most of the applications received were either for support for:

- Pupils who had arrived as an in-year admission
- A dramatic change in pupil need

- An 'other' reason, e.g. children having been made homeless, parental difficulties meaning that getting to school was complicated.



Most applications were to support a pupil's Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, with the remaining 16% requiring learning or support related to their medical needs.

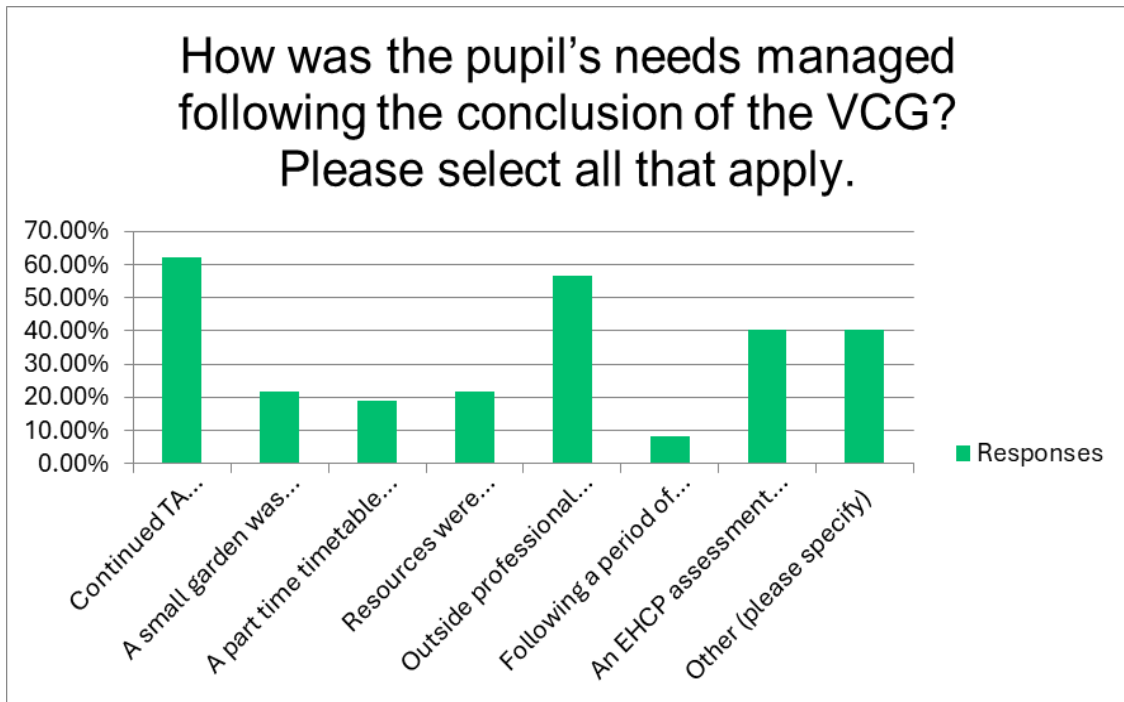


The vast majority of applications (95%) requested money for TA support. When schools were surveyed in May 2024, responses indicated that the TA support was predominantly used to support a pupil's SEMH needs and inclusion in school by providing additional support in class, or in a differentiated learning provision (a 'small garden'). As a result of this creative package, positives included; increased attendance, reduced suspensions, and children becoming more settled with staff learning to identify children's triggers/ emotional needs.

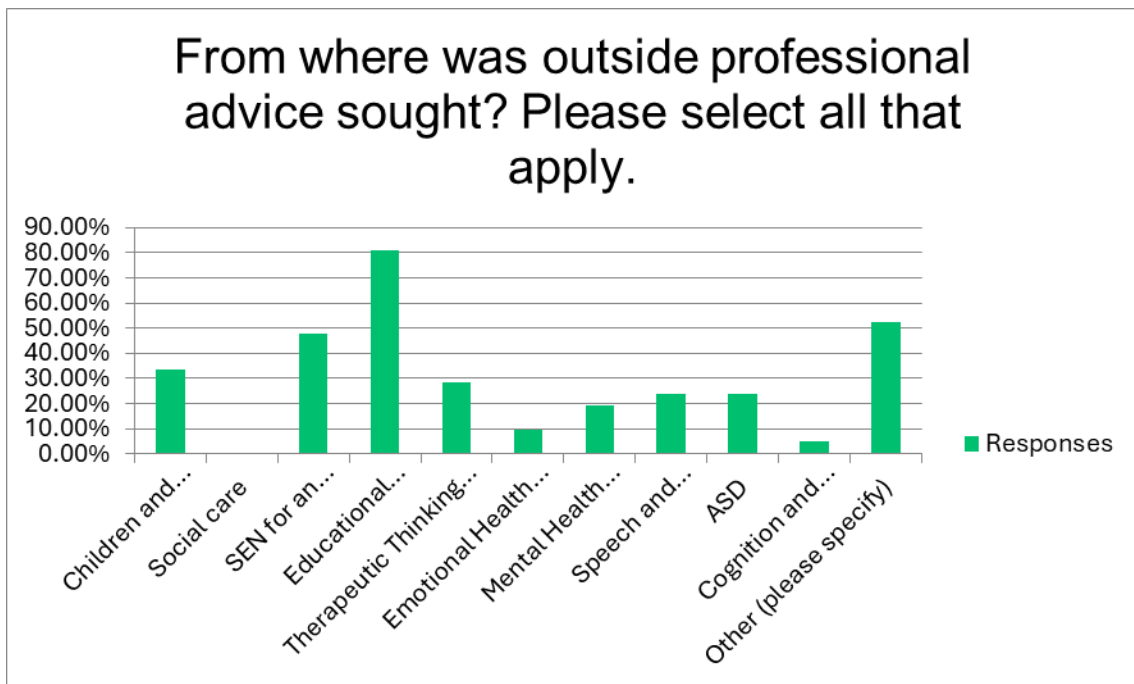
*'It has been possible to set up routines for the child and to implement advice received from the Autism Team. It gave us the opportunity to be flexible in the way that we supported X and to allow him time to adjust to school. We were able to implement an individual timetable with personalised learning.'*

*'We have been able to offer a wider range of activities as part of his small garden approach. We have also been able to introduce sensory circuits as part of his day. We are beginning to see some positive developments in his behaviour as a result.'*

Although 8% of pupils didn't require additional support after the conclusion of the VCG, the vast majority did. Schools often used their own budgets to continue to provide TA support, as well as supporting in other ways, e.g. purchasing resources. The VCG often helped schools gain evidence for an EHCP assessment and the subsequent EHCP meant they had the funding to continue the support.



The survey suggests that pupils in receipt of VCG had significant needs as Educational Psychology involvement was sought for 81% of pupils, 33% were referred to CAMHS and an EHCP assessment was requested for 48% of pupils. College was also requested for several children.



Schools were clear that the VCG is an effective use of funds. 91% of pupils were said to have made 'a lot' or 'some' progress since receiving funding:

*'Incidences of physical and emotional outbursts have reduced.'*

*'The child is more settled in the Reception unit and there have been less incidents of them running around school disrupting learning.'*

*'Without this support, I would think that attendance and attainment would be much lower.'*

*'Relative to the pupil's needs where we were when we applied for the grant, there has been ENORMOUS progress.'*

*'Girls are both now in school every day and enjoying school life. They are participating in all lessons and have made friends.'*

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The VCG aims to be fair, equitable and simple to request. Feedback from schools indicates that it is valued and has significant impact. If schools, particularly smaller primary schools, cannot access this support in the future it could lead to increased movement between schools, higher exclusion figures and increased pressure on the capacity of specialist support services.