



16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy

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Aim

Our school aims to:

- Have clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the type of support that is available and the means of applying for it
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education (DfE) 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2026 to 2027 and associated funding rules 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK

Definitions

- 'In care' is defined as: children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Looked after child' is defined as: a child in the care of a local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the authority in the exercise of any functions for more than 24 hours (section 22 of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Care leaver' is defined as:
A young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16, or
- A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

Roles & Responsibilities

The Trust

The Trustees has overall responsibility for approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy. In our school, responsibility for approving this policy has been delegated to the Executive Director of Finance and Operations
In our school, monitoring the implementation of this policy has been delegated to the Headteacher.



The Headteacher

The Headteacher and the Senior Deputy Headteacher are responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

Parents/carers

Our staff are responsible for implementing this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently. The senior leadership team (SLT) and the Head of Post 16 will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.

How we use the bursary fund

Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See section 6 below for details of our eligibility criteria.

The fund is intended to support students in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation in education and is not an entitlement.

There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

The fund will only be used to support essential costs directly related to barriers impacting students educational participation, including:

- travel to and from school or placement
- essential books and course materials
- specialist equipment or clothing required

Support may also include meal provision where necessary to enable participation.

The bursary will not be used for non-essential costs, including enrichment activities or general living costs

Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

Please note: the following eligibility criteria will be assessed **in addition** to the individual student's actual financial needs.

All awards will be based on an assessment of individual financial need and actual educational participation costs.



The school will not make flat-rate or blanket payments, and all awards must be supported by evidence of need.

Age

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2026 to 2027 academic year, students must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August 2026.

Students aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18-years-old, or
- Have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan.

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.

In exceptional circumstances, where students under 16 years old are on a funded 16 to 19 study programme at our school, we may use our discretion to pay bursaries to these younger students. However, if these students are enrolled at another institution that receives public funding for them, they will not be eligible for bursary funding.

Eligible education provision

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Be funded directly by the DfE or by the DfE via a local authority.
- Be funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund.
- Be otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is on the DfE's list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19; or
- Be 16 to 19 publicly funded study programmes leading to approved qualifications.

Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme are also eligible to receive a bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course.

Students are not eligible if:

- They are on an apprenticeship programme; or
- Are on any waged training.



Students who are studying via distance learning are eligible for either 16 to 19 bursary but are likely to require financial help on a more infrequent basis (e.g. travel to exams). If this is the case, we will provide support in-kind, such as a travel pass, details of which shall be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the DfE funding rules for 16 to 19 provision <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-rules-for-16-to-19-provision>

Asylum seekers

Accompanied asylum seekers under 18 with an adult relative or partner, and asylum seekers aged 18 and above are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum seekers who have not had asylum refused.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children:

- Are the responsibility of the local authority.
- Are to be treated as 'looked after' children; and
- Are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, where they have a financial need.

When these students reach 18-years-old, we will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary as a student from a defined vulnerable group if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the upper age limit.

Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Students with a financial need, who meet 1 of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (NB: those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after)
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves, or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner; or



- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right. Students must be in receipt of DLA or PIP and ESA or UC to be eligible – receipt of DLA or PIP alone does not meet the criteria.

UC has now replaced IS, as well as other benefits above, for current and future young people aged 16 to 18. However, students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (19+ continuers and students with an EHC plan) may still receive the legacy benefits listed above.

Students who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary. Students will not receive the bursary if they do not have any actual financial need (for example, because their financial needs are met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs).

Where a bursary is provided, awards will be based on actual financial need, up to £1,200 where appropriate, and will not be automatically awarded at this level for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, cases will be looked at individually and the outcome based on a particular student's needs. Students will only receive the amount they actually need to participate.

We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, and provide more than £1,200 per year if such would be necessary in all the circumstances for the student to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid for from our discretionary bursary allocation.

If a student's study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, they will be paid a pro-rata amount. We will also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding whether a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a bursary for vulnerable groups if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

We will provide this support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible. It will not be provided as regular payments for living costs.

The school will submit funding claims for students in defined vulnerable groups directly to the DfE at specified points in the year.

Discretionary bursaries

In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- Are in receipt of Universal Credit or other benefits.
- Students are in receipt of Free School Meals



- Able to demonstrate financial hardship arising from other reasons.

In assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the institution, or a location for a placement
- The number of dependent children in the student's household
- The requirements of their study programme
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help e.g., young carer.
- the actual participation needs the student has

Awards will reflect actual participation costs and evidence provided, and no flat-rate awards will be made.

There is no fixed entitlement or predetermined amount for discretionary bursary awards. All allocations will be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the total funding available to the school, the number of eligible applicants, each student's individual circumstances, and the level of financial need and barriers to participation in education. Decisions will be made in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner to ensure funds are distributed appropriately to those in greatest need.

Where the number of eligible applications exceeds the available funding, the school will apply a prioritisation process to ensure that funding is allocated to those students with the greatest need. Priority will be given to students who:

- Have the lowest household income
- Have the highest essential participation costs
- Are at risk of not participating in or completing their education due to financial hardship
- Have additional vulnerabilities (e.g. young carers, students with dependents, or other exceptional circumstances)

As a result, it may not be possible to fully meet all identified costs for every eligible applicant.

Decisions regarding bursary awards will be made by designated staff responsible for post-16 provision and finance, in line with this policy. All decisions will be based on evidence of eligibility, financial need, and participation costs, and will be applied consistently to ensure fairness and transparency. Appropriate oversight will be maintained by senior leadership to ensure compliance with DfE guidance and funding requirements.



We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a discretionary bursary if they continue to satisfy the criteria and must re-apply.

Evidence

All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence, which provide the school with details of annual household income including any benefits received. Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:

- A copy of the three most recent monthly award statements for UC or IS
- Documents such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, birth certificate or utility bills
- Written confirmation of the student's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority
- A copy of the UC claim from Department of Work and Pensions
- Latest P60
- A letter from the DWP
- Wage slips
- Self-employed accounts

The school will retain evidence of:

- eligibility
- financial need
- how funds are allocated and used

to demonstrate compliance with DfE funding and audit requirements.

Application and payment process

Applications

Applications should be submitted by the 30th of September to allow enough time for our school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. This date will be clearly stated on the application form.

However, we acknowledge that students' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole school year.

Applicants will be notified in writing (either via email or via letter) whether their application has been successful, together with the amount of funding awarded. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their application for a bursary, they must follow the school's complaints procedure.



Payment process

In line with identified best practice in the Department of Education guidance support will be provided primarily in kind (e.g., travel passes, equipment, meal credits). Cash payments will only be made where in-kind provision is not possible and must relate to specific identified costs.

Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

Payments of the bursary are conditional on students meeting the following conditions in relation to their standards of attendance and behaviour:

- Bursary support may be conditional on attendance, behaviour and engagement, but decisions will always take into account individual circumstances.
- Following our sixth-form code of conduct
- Information provided on the bursary application form is true and accurate to the best of the knowledge of students and parents/carers
- Any support provided is used for the intended purpose.

Parents & students are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions. Students who fail to meet these conditions may have their payment withheld, but we will always take students' individual circumstances into consideration. This includes considering the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

The school reserves the right to recover bursary payments or support where it is identified that funds have not been used for the intended purpose or where false or misleading information has been provided. Any decision to recover funds will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the individual student's circumstances and ensuring that any action taken is fair and proportionate.

Change in circumstances

If there are changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers must notify the school without delay.

Record keeping

Any paperwork and documents we retain for audit purposes (for example, copies of application forms, documents as evidence and any agreements signed by students) will be kept securely in line with our data protection policy, privacy notices and record retention schedule.



Anyone wishing to access their records should consult our Trust Data Protection Policy (link from our school website) and subject a subject access request.

Unspent Funds

Funding for discretionary bursary funding cannot be carried forward for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the Dfe using the [online enquiry form](#), specifying the amount of funding and the year/s it relates to, no later than 31 March each year. Unspent funds will be managed and reported in line with DfE requirements, and any recovery of funds will follow national guidance

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of Post 16 and the Head of Finance & Operations every year. At every review, the policy will be reconsidered through the policy approval process.

Administrative costs

Up to 5% of the bursary allocation may be used to cover administrative costs associated with managing the fund.

Publicising the Bursary Fund

Information about the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund will be made widely available to students and parents/carers. This will include:

- Publication of this policy on the school website
- Information shared during the post-16 application and enrolment process
- Guidance provided by sixth form staff and pastoral teams

The school will ensure that students are made aware of the bursary fund and understand how to apply.