



16 – 19 Bursary Fund Policy

Responsible Staff	KBO/CPA
Governors Committee Responsible	Staffing and Finance Committee
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1. Aims

The 16 to 19 bursary fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries, and this policy refers to both:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
- Discretionary bursaries

Our school aims to:

- Have clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make sure that bursary funds are administered appropriately and fairly, with due regard to the Equality Act 2010
- Communicate clearly to parents / carers and students the type of support which is available and the means of applying for it
- Communicate clearly to parents / carers and students the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

2. Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on the 16 to 19 bursary fund for the 2026 to 2027 academic year.

3. 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

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The governing board

The governing board has overall responsibility for approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and has delegated this to the Staffing and Finance committee.

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The governing board retains overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and ensuring compliance with relevant requirements.

4.2 The headteacher

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

4.3 The head of sixth form

The Head of Sixth Form is responsible for setting eligibility criteria for bursary funding and making sure these comply with the Equality Act 2010 and promoting awareness of the 16-19 bursary fund to prospective applicants and their parents / carers.

4.4 Bursary panel

The bursary panel is responsible for reviewing applications and supporting evidence in accordance with this policy

The panel consists of

- The head of sixth form
- The school business director

4.5 The school business director

The school business director is responsible for ensuring that the bursary funding is accounted for accurately.

4.6 Staff

Our staff are responsible for implementing this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently.

The senior leadership team will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.

4.7 Parents / Carers

Parents / Carers are expected to notify staff or the headteacher of any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and any changes in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding.

4.8 Students

Students are responsible for meeting the conditions attached to the receipt of any support from the bursary funding.

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5. 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 aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

We use the fund to provide students with support to fund:

- Transport
- Books
- Equipment or specialist clothing
- Field trips and other course-related costs
- The costs of attending university interviews and open days

We will provide support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible.

The bursary fund is not for non-education related costs. For example, it will not be provided for:

- General living costs
- Non-essential extra-curricular activities
- Any learning support and pastoral services that we provide

The bursary fund may be used to provide exceptional further help with childcare costs if the costs exceed the [Care to Learn](#) scheme's weekly maximum rates. Childcare provision must meet Care to Learn scheme eligibility rules, and evidence will be required that the maximum amount is already paid through that scheme and a top up is required. Any top up will be made in line with Care to Learn funding rules and go directly to the childcare provider, not the student.

6. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

Please note the following eligibility criteria will be assessed in addition to the student's actual financial needs. This means there is no guarantee of funding.

- No student will automatically be awarded an amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have
- Funding provided to each eligible student is based on their actual participation needs (supported by evidence) and not a flat or fixed-rate payment that does not reflect the actual costs they face

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- Students with no participation costs will not receive funding

6.1 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 which 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.

6.2 Eligible education provision

Students' provision must be subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality, such as Ofsted. The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Be funded directly by DfE or by DFE via a local authority;
- 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
- Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a King's Trust Team Programme

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 not likely to require financial help from the bursary fund. If they do require financial help, we will provide support in kind, such as a travel pass to attend exams. Details of this shall be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Exhall Grange Specialist School is an eligible educational provision.

6.3 Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the [DfE funding rules for 16-19 provision](#).

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6.4 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.

7. Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Students with a financial need, who meet one of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1 – 6.4 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (note: those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after);
- Care leavers
 - Note: where a young person has left the care of the local authority via achieving permanence through an order, such as a Special Guardianship Order, they are a care leaver. They must meet the definition of a 'care leaver' in full (see section 3 of this policy) to be eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups
- 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
 - Note: 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 is replacing some benefits for new claimants, including IS and income-related ESA, so current and future young people aged 16 to 18 will not be in receipt of 'legacy' benefits. However,

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students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (such as students with an EHC plan) may still receive 'legacy' benefits.

Students will be funded to reflect the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the actual participation needs and costs they have.

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). Should we refuse the application on this basis, we will discuss this with the student and their support worker/parent/carer where applicable.

Where a bursary is provided, the funds will generally be up to £1,200 per year 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 and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to provide more than £1,200 per year for a student who meets the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups if it is necessary, in all the circumstances, for the student to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from the school's discretionary bursary allocation or the school's own funds.

If a student's study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, this will be considered in the assessment for the bursary amount provided as they may not need as much financial support as those on longer programmes. We will also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding the correct bursary amount to ensure it is appropriate.

We will review each 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.

8. Discretionary bursaries

8.1 Criteria and assessment

In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1 to 6.4 above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- Household income is below £30,000 per year, or the student or their family is in receipt of certain benefits.
- Students are in receipt of Free School Meals.
- Students who do not satisfy any of the criteria listed in this section, but who are able to demonstrate financial hardship arising from other reasons, may apply for a discretionary bursary.

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

- Level of household income

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- 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

There is no set limit for the amount of discretionary bursary that can be awarded to students. We will base all decisions around which students receive a discretionary bursary, and how much bursary they receive, on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

The amount awarded will also depend on the funds available for distribution.

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.

8.2 Emergency meal and travel support

Students who face severe hardship can apply for emergency meals and travel support from the discretionary bursary for the days they attend their study programme. At our discretion, we may provide this support without completing the usual household income and evidence checks.

To make a claim for emergency meal and travel support, you should contact the head of sixth form.

Emergency support will be a temporary arrangement, with a full discretionary bursary assessment completed as soon as practicable. We will keep records and documentation related to emergency support for audit purposes.

9. Application and payment process

9.1 Applications

Applications should be submitted using the school's bursary application form.

Applications should ideally be submitted by **9 October 2026** 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.

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9.2 Evidence

All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence, which we will verify. Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:

- A copy of the IS or UC award notice, in the student's name;
- Document 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; and/or
- A copy of the UC claim from Department of Work and Pensions
- Confirmation from Warwickshire County Council of Free School Meals eligibility

9.3 Payment process

Payments are made using the following process:

- Make in-kind payments, such as travel passes, books, equipment or vouchers for meals
- Make monthly payments by BACS transfer into the student's bank account in their own name

9.4 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:

- Attends school regularly
- Completes the work that is expected of them
- Abides by school rules
- Remains in school for the full length of their course

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.

We will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays) and where students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

We reserve the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

If we find evidence that a student or parent/carer has knowingly submitted misleading or fraudulent information, resulting in the student receiving a bursary they were not entitled to, we will attempt to recover the overpayment from the student. Any instances of significant fraud will be reported to the DfE.

We will consider the impact of such an action on the individual student before taking a final decision to do so, and any decision will be confirmed to the student in writing.

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10. Change in circumstances

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

11. Record keeping and audit

The school will maintain comprehensive and accurate records relating to the 16 to 19 bursary fund. These records will be kept securely and be readily available for audit purposes. Records will include, but are not limited to:

- Copies of application forms and supporting evidence;
- Proof that students meet eligibility criteria;
- Records of 'zero bursary' students;
- Details of assessment decisions and rationale for awards;
- Records of all payments made to students, including dates, value and purpose;
- Copies of documents signed by students to give formal agreement to the conditions of payment;
- Evidence of student attendance and progress monitoring;
- Records relating to emergency meal and travel support.

Records will be retained for 6 academic years after the end of the academic year in which the student completed their programme.

12. Unspent funds

Funding for bursary funding cannot be carried forward by the school for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the DfE by the school using the customer help centre, specifying the amount of funding and the year(s) it relates to, no later than 31 March each year. The DfE will recover all unspent funds.

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by Caroline Parkhouse, Assistant Head Post 16 every year. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Staffing and Finance Committee.

14. Complaints or appeals

Where any student or parent/carers is unhappy with how we have managed their application for bursary funding or the support that has been provided, they are free to make a complaint or appeal in line with the school's complaints policy.