

16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy

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1	November 2025	Initial Trust-wide policy replacing individual school policies

This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice (where appropriate).

Contents

1. Aims and scope.....	4
2. Guidance.....	4
3. Definitions	4
4. Roles and responsibilities.....	5
4.1. The Board of Trustees	5
4.2. The Head.....	5
4.3. Bursary panel	5
4.4. CEO	5
4.5. Chief Operating Officer	5
4.6. Staff.....	5
4.7. Parents/carers	6
4.8. Pupils.....	6
5. How we use the bursary fund	6
6. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries	6
6.1. Age.....	7
6.2. Residency.....	7
6.3. Asylum seekers	7
7. Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups	8
8. Discretionary bursaries.....	9
9. Application and payment process.....	9
9.1. Applications	9
9.2. Evidence.....	10
9.3. Payment process.....	10
9.4. Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments	10
10. Change in circumstances.....	11
11. Record keeping and audit.....	11
12. Unspent funds	11
13. Complaints or appeals	11

1. Aims and scope

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

This policy aims to:

- Set out 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
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the type of support that is available and how to apply for it
- Make clear 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);

- [16 to 19 bursary fund for the 2025 to 2026 academic year.](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance>

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

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 or 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 Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees (the Board), through its Finance Committee, has overall responsibility for

- Approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Ensuring compliance with relevant requirements
- Setting eligibility criteria for bursary funding and making sure these comply with the Equality Act 2010

4.2. The Head

The Head¹ is responsible for:

- Making sure that staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Making sure the policy is being applied consistently
- Promoting awareness of the 16 to 19 bursary fund to prospective applicants and their parents/carers

4.3. Bursary panel

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

The panel consists of:

- The Head
- Another senior member of staff (likely the Head of 16-19)

4.4. CEO

The Chief Executive Officer is accountable for ensuring that bursary funding is accounted for accurately

4.5. Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Operating Officer 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.

¹ For the purposes of this policy, Head can refer to Executive Head, Headteacher or Head of School/Satellite as appropriate and relevant

4.7. Parents/carers

Parents/carers are also expected to notify staff or the head of:

- Any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Any change in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding

4.8. Pupils

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

5. How we use the bursary fund

Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See sections 6, 7 and 8 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 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

We use **the vulnerable persons fund** to provide students with support including, but not necessarily limited to:

- LA contribution to Transport costs, or public transport costs of school travel if travelling in and this element is not fully funded elsewhere
- Resources or equipment supportive of programme of study in relation to education, employment and training
- Maintenance of the same
- Field trips that are essential to the course and other course-related costs
- The costs of attending college interviews, placements, work experience and/or post 19 provision, such as open days
- Specialist clothing pertaining to programme of study in relation to education, employment and training
- Emergency meal support

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

6. 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. This means:

- 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

6.1. Age

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2025-26 academic year, students must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August 2025.

Students aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary (see section 6.6 below) if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18 years old (19+ continuers)
- Have an education, health and care (EHCP) plan

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries in the 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.

Students aged under 19 enrolled on higher education qualifications are not eligible for support from the 16-19 bursary fund.

6.2. Residency

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

6.3. 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
- To be treated as 'looked after' children
- 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. A student who is an asylum seeker will be eligible for

either bursary, provided they continue to be fully funded by their placing LA for their education at this school

7. 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 to 6.4 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (N.B. 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
- 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

UC has 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 (such as students with an EHC plan) may still receive the legacy benefits listed above.

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 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.

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.

8. Discretionary bursaries

In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1 to 6.4 above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy 1 or more of the following criteria:

- The student's parents / carers are in receipt of universal credit and household income is such that it prevents them from participating in education
- The student's parents / carers are in receipt of universal credit and is being charged a contribution for their travel by the placing LA, evidenced in writing in the form of a letter or formal email issued by the placing LA.

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 still apply for a discretionary bursary.

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 school.

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.

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.

The funds available for the discretionary bursary are limited and priority will be given to pupils who otherwise would not be able to attend school due to financial hardship.

9. Application and payment process

9.1. Applications

Applications should be submitted to the Head.

Schools will decide when applications should be submitted but must allow enough time for our school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis.

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.

Any enquiries about the application process should be directed to the school office.

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 formal dated letter or email from the LA, confirming your child's eligibility for transport and contribution costs
- A copy of the UC or IS award notice from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and/or evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP. To be eligible for the bursary for a defined vulnerable group, these documents must be in the student's own name.
- Written confirmation of the student's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority

9.3. Payment process

For any Discretionary award, payments are made using the following process:

- BACs or direct payment to the LA charging for transport
- Payments in kind, e.g. Travel passes, books, equipment, meal vouchers
- Regular BACs transfers direct to the student's own nominate bank account

In addition to the above, for an Vulnerable person's aware, payments may also be:

- Payments in kind, e.g. Travel passes, books, equipment, meal vouchers
- Regular BACs transfers direct to the student's own nominate bank account

Cash payments will not be made in any circumstances.

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

Attendance not falling below 90%, unless the reason for absence is directly linked to a student's underlying health or EHCP need. These would be outlined in Section G of the EHCP in most instances

- Receipts for expenditure and purchases made with the bursary funding must be provided. In the case of support with transport costs, the Trust would expect receipts from the charging LA which evidence the amount paid, for whom, and the time at which it was paid,
- All students are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions. Parents may sign on a students' behalf

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.

If students have received in-kind support such as equipment or travel cards, they will be asked to return these if they fail to meet the conditions.

We will stop payments where students have decided to leave school before the end of their course.

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

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.

10. 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.

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

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. Complaints or appeals

Where any student or parent 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 as per the EAT complaints policy