16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

Date established by governing body	Autumn Term 2026
Date for full implementation	Immediately
Date for review	Autumn Term 2027

Aims

Our school aims to:

- Have clear, fair, appropriate and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make clear to parents/carers and pupils the type of support that is available and the means of applying for it
- Make clear to parents/carers and pupils the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds
- Provide support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation they face so that they can remain in education.

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.

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 at least 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16 (they can have entered care at any age, but they must have spent at least 13 weeks in care after their 14th birthday before leaving after the age of 16) or
  - A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to turning 18 for a period of at least 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to at least 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board has overall responsibility for approving, amending and monitoring this policy.

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The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that staff are familiar with this policy and that it is applied consistently.

Staff

Staff members are responsible for implementing this policy consistently.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the headteacher of any concerns or queries regarding this policy and any change in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding.

Students

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

How we use the bursary fund

Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund.

The fund is intended to support students aged 16 to 19 to overcome specific financial barriers to participation so that they can remain in education.

There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
- Discretionary bursaries

We use the bursary fund to provide students with relevant support in kind for:

- Transport
- Books
- Equipment
- Educational Visits
- Essential or Specialist Clothing
- Course related costs

The bursary fund will not be utilised for non-education related costs.

Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

The following eligibility criteria will be assessed **in addition** to the individual student's actual financial needs. 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. Students with no participation costs will not receive funding.

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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.

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

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 one of these groups:

- Be funded directly by the DfE, or by the 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
- 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.

Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the DfE funding rules for 16 to 19 provision.

Asylum seekers

Accompanied asylum seeking children 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.

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Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are:

- The responsibility of the Local Authority;
- To be treated as 'looked after' children; and
- 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 one of the following four criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 in kind.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after and are not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups)
- 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; 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, 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 in kind 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 in kind 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 in kind 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 request 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 provide this support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind. It will not be provided as regular payments for living costs, extra-curricular activities, non-essential activities or learning support/pastoral services.

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.

Discretionary bursaries

In addition to the criteria outlined above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if assistance is required to stay on in further education or training. The following criteria will be considered upon application:

- Level of household income
- The requirements of the study programme
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean that they require extra assistance

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.
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.

Students who face severe hardship can apply for emergency meal 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. 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.

Any funding not allocated at the end of the academic year will be utilised to provide resources and equipment to enhance the provision for Post-16 pupils.

Evidence

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

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- A copy of the UC or IS award notice from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that clearly states the student's name and that they are entitled to the benefits in their own right and/or evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP, in the student's name

- 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

- P60, 3 months pay slips or audited accounts/tax return/tax credits demonstrating self employed income or official pension letter

- Benefit entitlement confirmation

- Relevant documents relating to household income or circumstances

Application and payment process

Applications

Applications should be submitted in writing to the headteacher by 30 September to allow enough time for the school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. 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 letter) whether their application has been successful, together with the amount of funding in kind 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

Bursary payments are made using the following process:

Where possible, services or equipment will be purchased in kind directly by the school from the bursary allocation.

If this is not possible, we will reimburse the young person via a cheque, once proof of the expenditure (receipts, etc) has been received. **This method must be agreed in advance.** Cash payments will not be made in any circumstances.

Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

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

- Attendance; authorised absences will not be considered

- Adherence to school policies and conduct

All pupils are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions upon application.

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Students who fail to meet these conditions may have the bursary withheld. 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 been absent for a period of four 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.

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.

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.

Record keeping

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

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually and is available publicly on the school website.

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Chair of Governors: Tim Chrisp

Date: Autumn 2026