

S29 16-19 Bursary Fund

Last Reviewed:

June 2019

Next Review:

June 2021

Responsible:

Head of Sixth Form

1. Introduction

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is a scheme set up by the government to help the most vulnerable young people aged 16-19 continue in full time education. Its purpose is to provide financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation, so that they can remain in education.

2. Categories of Bursary

There are two types of 16-19 bursary:

- **Vulnerable Student Bursary** - this is a bursary of up to £1200 per year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups (see section 3.2).
- **Discretionary bursary** – this is awarded at the academy’s discretion based on individual needs to cover specific costs such as transport*, books and equipment, field trips and other course-related costs and it may also be appropriate for funds to be used towards the costs of attending university interviews and open days. The academy offers two levels of financial support based on household income. The thresholds for determining eligibility to claim are detailed in the eligibility section 3.3 below.

**Whilst the discretionary bursary can be used for transport costs where these are a barrier to participation, this does not replace the statutory duty on local authorities. Each local authority must set out in an annually published transport statement the arrangements they will make to facilitate the participation in education or training for students of sixth-form age.*

3. Eligibility

3.1 Base Eligibility

The base eligibility requirements of the scheme, which are applicable to both vulnerable and discretionary bursaries, are defined by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA). They are as follows;

- **Age** – students must be over 16 and under 19 on 31st August of their final year*.
**Students aged 19 and over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they remain on a study programme they began aged 16-18 or have an Education, Health and Care Plan. Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.*

- **Residency** – students must meet the residency criteria in the EFSA funding regulations for post-16 provision. This document sets out the evidence required to confirm eligibility and can be found at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723721/16_to_19_funding_guidance_Regulations_2018_to_2019-v1b.pdf

The young person must then also meet the eligibility criteria for the category of bursary they are applying for.

3.2 Vulnerable Student Bursary Eligibility:

Students **must** fall into one of the categories below to be eligible for a vulnerable student bursary:

- you're in or have recently left local authority care
- you receive Income Support or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself
- you receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

The allocation of these funds is subject to audit so the academy will require evidence that the application is genuine. The academy will retain copies of evidence for a period of 6 years. All information will be treated in confidence. Appropriate evidence would include:

- A letter setting out the benefit to which the young person is entitled, confirming that the terms of the benefit allow them to participate in further education.
- Written confirmation of the young person's current or previous looked after status from the local authority which looks after them or provides their leaving care services.

3.3 Discretionary Student Bursary Eligibility:

Where a student does not meet the vulnerable student criteria, he or she may still be eligible for some support from the Discretionary Fund. The academy has set two tiers of support based on household income.

Tier A

- Students entitled to free school meals or those who were entitled to free school meals within the preceding 5 years of their joining the Sixth Form. Where students are applying under the free school meal criteria, the academy will need to be satisfied that the application is genuine following the standard procedures that are currently in operation for FSM application. (*Students claiming in this category will not normally be eligible to claim bursary funding for meals as they will be entitled to receive a free school meal at school*)

and/or

- Students whose household income is less than £16,190. Where students are applying under the household income criteria the academy will require the following evidence:
 - A copy of entitlement to means – tested state benefit or Tax Credit Award Notice confirming household income of less than £16,190.
 - Evidence of total household income (including earned and unearned) of less than £16,190.

Tier B – where there is a surplus of funds after the allocation to students in Tier A, students whose household income is less than £25,000, may apply for a lower level of support. The following evidence will be required for students in this group:

- A copy of entitlement to means – tested state benefit or Tax Credit Award Notice confirming household income of less than £25,000.
- Evidence of total household income (including earned and unearned) of less than £25,000.

Students will be required to inform the school of any changes in their financial circumstances which may affect their eligibility for bursary funding.

4. Allocation of Funds

Vulnerable Student Bursary

The funding for the vulnerable student bursaries is held centrally by the Student Bursary Support Service. Whenever a new student meeting the criteria is identified the academy must draw the funding down by completing and submitting a claim form via the SBSS online portal found at <https://studentbursarysupport.education.gov.uk>. The funding total for each Vulnerable Student Bursary is £1200 and the allocation of this will be decided by the academy, taking into consideration the individual circumstances of the student involved.

Discretionary Bursary

- 10% of the fund will be held back for applicants who join later on in the year or whose personal circumstances change. Students applying under Tier A will be assessed individually and awarded a bursary based on their actual financial need, up to a maximum of £800 per annum.
- If there is still money in the fund after the allocation of funds to Tier A, students, applying under Tier B will be assessed individually and awarded a bursary based on actual financial need, up to a maximum of £400 per annum.
- Funds leftover from this allocation can be used to fund other extra provision through which all students who are eligible for bursary must benefit.

5. Conditions for receipt of student bursaries

The academy will set out clear expectations of conduct, behaviour, attitude to learning, attendance and punctuality that students must meet if they are to receive their bursary payments.

Students will be reviewed on a half termly basis. In order for the ensuing payments to be authorised, students must be compliant with the code of conduct and not be subject to behaviour interventions or formal sanctions. Upon review each half term, students will be expected to have attendance of 96% or above for the half term and should have no unauthorised absence.

Students in receipt of this grant funding will not usually be eligible or granted any further financial support from the school in help towards these costs.

These expectations will be set out in the bursary agreement and by signing this agreement students, parents and/or carers are agreeing to meet the terms set out by the academy.

6. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children do not receive cash support from the Home Office and are the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as looked after children and are eligible for a vulnerable bursary ('in care' group).

When these young people reach legal adulthood at age 18, institutions must consider their immigration status. If the asylum claim is decided in their favour the local authority must provide them with the same support and services as they do care leavers. As such, they will continue to be eligible for a vulnerable bursary until they reach the upper age limit.

Where an asylum claim is not supported, the individual may not be able to stay legally in the UK. When asylum claims have been fully heard/the appeals process exhausted, an individual has no entitlement to public funds (with a few exceptions where the withdrawal of support would be seen as a breach of human rights).

7. Applications for bursary funding

Students in receipt of free school meals or who were in receipt of free school meals within the preceding 5 years, will automatically be enrolled onto the bursary programme and will be given a bursary agreement to sign.

If students wish to apply for bursary funding they should submit a letter of application to the Head of Sixth Form outlining which level of bursary they are applying for and how they fulfil the eligibility criteria. They will need to provide necessary evidence to support their application. The deadline for receipt of applications is the last working day of September of each academic year.

Funding is not guaranteed by receipt of an application form. Each application will be considered on a case by case basis if eligibility criteria have been met and will be subject to the availability of funds.

Completed application forms with suitable evidence of eligibility should be returned to the Sixth Form Support Officer.

7.1 Late applications

Late applications will be considered at any point during the year for students whose financial circumstances change, or for new students joining the sixth form.

Awards for regular costs such as travel or meals will only be payable from the time the student became eligible to the end of the course duration.

Payments will commence from the next scheduled instalment unless this would create undue hardship for the student. The Head of Sixth Form must approve any such payment.

8. Bursary Payments

Students will be paid in five equal instalments. The initial payment will be made just before October half term, with the remaining four payments made in the final week of each subsequent half term (i.e. Autumn 2, Spring 1, Spring 2 and Summer 1).

Payments will be subject to the student meeting the required attendance, punctuality and behaviour targets as outlined on the application form and bursary agreement the student will sign. The Head of Sixth Form will have the final say on payments.

Where appropriate, payments in kind can be used by the school. This will always be the case for curriculum trips/activities paid for by the school.

All monetary payments will be made by BACS transfer into the student's own bank account. We cannot transfer money into any other bank account.

9. Decisions and appeals

The Head of Sixth Form and Deputy Head of Sixth Form are responsible for deciding who receives bursary funding based on the criteria set out in the policy, section 5.

9.1 Appeals against the decision not to award a bursary fund grant

If an application for bursary funding is denied students or parents/carers have the right to appeal this decision. Students or their parent/carer will be required to put any appeal in writing within 21 days of receiving confirmation of their application outcome. The letter must clearly set out the reason for the appeal, proving that the student has been wrongly assessed as falling outside of the eligibility criteria, plus any further evidence to support the appeal. Letters should be sent to the Head of Sixth Form.

The appeal will be considered by an appointed panel of SLT and/or school governors. The decision of the panel is final and will be given in writing within 14 days of the decision.

9.2 Appeal against the withdrawal of a payment during the course of the academic year

The Head of Sixth Form will review bursary criteria each half term and determine whether or not any student has failed to meet the criteria set out in section 5. If a decision is made to withhold payment, the student will be notified in writing before the next usual payment date.

Appeals against decisions made regarding failure to fulfil the criteria should be made to the Principal, in writing, and within 5 working days of the decision being received. The Principal will review the appeal and respond within 10 days. The Principal's decision is final.

10. Data and Confidentiality

The academy will treat all information supplied under this policy as confidential and in accordance with the academy's data protection policy and records management policy. For audit purposes all information must be retained for a period of 6 years.

11. Audit

The 16-19 Bursary fund is subject to audit so the academy must retain all documentation relating to each claim, whether it was awarded or not and a brief justification. In particular documentation should include:

- Application forms
- Evidence showing the student is eligible
- Evidence of payments received (vulnerable claims)
- Evidence of payments made to the students

All documentation must be kept for a period of 6 years.

12. Misuse and Fraud

The academy has a duty to investigate instances of suspected fraud when a student is applying for bursary funds.

When evidence is found that misleading or fraudulent information has been knowingly submitted by a student or parent or carer, resulting in the student receiving a bursary that they should not have received, the academy will attempt to recover overpayment from the student. The matter may also be referred to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their parent or carer facing prosecution.