



16 -19 Bursary Fund

Procedures and Statement 2025-26

Background

The 16-19 bursary funding grant was introduced by the Government in September 2011/12, replacing the old EMA payments, and has since undergone some changes but the basic principle remains the same. Funding is ringfenced and should be used to provide financial support to young people who face significant financial barriers to participation in education or training post 16. There are 2 elements to the funding:

1. Vulnerable young people (those in care; care leavers; young people receiving Income Support and young people receiving both Disability Living Allowance and Employment Support Allowance) – up to £1,200 per year
2. The rest of the fund is allocated to schools, colleges and training providers so that they can identify and support the young people who need it with a Discretionary Bursary.

Aims

Our Trust aims to:

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

References

The latest guidance on the administration of the funding was issued on 23rd July 2025 and indicates how the funding should be allocated, what it can be used for, how it should be monitored and what happens to unspent funding: [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2025-to-2026)

Further guidance for students can also be found here <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

Guidance

We need to ensure that our existing and future practices are compliant with the Funding guidance for the forthcoming Academic Year, that we can provide full supporting evidence for each application and that all awards made are as per the funding regulations document:

These are the core elements we need to comply with as per the updated 25/26 guidance:

- The discretionary bursary must be supported by a School (Trust) Policy or Statement set in line with the funding rules. It must identify how the fund will be used, the eligibility criteria, and any T's & C's that are set. It must also be compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

- Application forms must clearly state the criteria for making an application and the type of supporting evidence required. Deadline submission dates must be clear but flexible for in year changes to circumstances. They must state awards are not guaranteed and include a declaration to be signed by the student/parents making them aware a false submission could result in prosecution.
- Institutions must ensure they assess the individual students needs when awarding the bursary funding on a case by case basis. We cannot make flat rate payments. This also applies to Vulnerable Student payments who should only receive the amount they require to participate in their education programme and not just get the full £1200 because they fall into that category.
- Eligibility Criteria must be clearly identified and supporting records to evidence this has been reviewed and confirmed for each application must be retained for inspection by auditors.
- We should not make monetary payments to individuals as far as possible but should instead purchase the resources required on behalf of the students once they have been approved. 'ESFA does not recommend that large or lump sum bursary payments are made to students'
- Any Bursary Funding Grant not spent within the year of allocation may be rolled forward to the next academic year but may not be carried forward for longer than 1 year. Unspent funding in excess of this period must be reported to the ESFA by 31st March each year and they will recover the unspent funding. enquiries.esfa@education.gov.uk
- The MAT utilises 5% of the Bursary Funding to cover administrative and processing costs
- Students in receipt of bursary funding must be identified on the school census or by completing the ILR (Individualised Learner Record)
- The Bursary Funding Grant and Allocations will now form part of the Annual Audit. **(See Appendix 1)**

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).

A 'Looked after child' (LAC) 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 Business Management team are responsible for reviewing the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Procedures annually, ensuring they are kept up to date and made available to all schools.
- The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring school staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Procedures Document and that it is being applied consistently.
- School Staff are responsible for the implementation of this document, ensuring it is promoted to students and managed in accordance with the DfE Guidance. (The central Business Management team will provide school staff with appropriate training in relation to the implementation of the procedures to be followed).
- Parents and carers are expected to notify the staff or Headteacher of any concerns or queries in relation to the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund document or processes.

Eligibility Criteria

These are some of the relevant recommended Eligibility Criteria categories for the 25/26 funding:

Age Criteria:

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2025 to 2026 Academic year, Students must be at least 16 but under 19 years old as at 31/08/2025.

Students 19 or over may receive a discretionary bursary if

- they are still on a programme they began between 16-18 or
- they have an EHCP (Education, Health & Care Plan)

Students over 19 are not eligible for a 'Vulnerable Groups' bursary.

These 2 groups of 19+ Students above may be awarded a discretionary bursary while they continue in education as long as their eligibility continues and the school considers they require support to continue their participation

Students between 14-16 may be awarded a discretionary bursary in exceptional circumstances if they are on funded 16 to 19 study programmes (e.g. following an accelerated study programme) but NOT if they are attending another institution who also receive public funding for that student (e.g. where they are attending college as part of a KS4 programme).

Students aged under 19 enrolled on Higher Education qualifications are NOT eligible for support from the 16-19 Bursary Fund

Educational Eligibility:

Students must be undertaking provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assure quality e.g. Ofsted and it must also fall into one of the categories below:-

- Be funded by the ESFA either directly or 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 ESFA's list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19
- Be a 16 to 19 traineeship programme

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 who are studying via distance learning may be eligible for 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.

Students are **not eligible** if they are on Apprenticeship Programmes, on any waged training, or are employed rather than in education.

Residency:

Students must meet the residency criteria in the [ESFA funding regulations for post-16 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 generally entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

We may 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 and should be treated as 'looked after' children. They 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.

Under no circumstances should you give cash to any asylum seeker unless they are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC).

Bursary Types

Vulnerable Groups:

Students who are deemed to be in 'Vulnerable Groups' should be awarded the amount of support they need based on an individual assessment of the type of costs they incur but this should be no more than the maximum of £1200 per year.

Definitions of Vulnerable Groups are as follows: -

- **In Care** (LAC or under a Care Order - those in private foster care are not classed as LAC)
- **Care Leavers** (see below for definition)
- **Receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC)** because they are supporting themselves or themselves and a dependent who lives with them (Child/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 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, 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, and provide more than £1,200 per year if it would be necessary in all the circumstances, for the student to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from our discretionary bursary allocation or our own funds, but if paid from the discretionary bursary, all the usual eligibility criteria and assessment processes must still be met and followed,

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 Bursary for vulnerable students can be claimed from the Student Bursary Support Service. The School Sixth Form Administrator must only submit a funding claim to the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) online portal:

- when you have seen and verified appropriate evidence to confirm that the student is eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups, and
- when you have assessed the actual amount of financial help the student needs to participate. It is this amount that institutions should request from SBSS

Discretionary Bursaries:

There is no limit for a discretionary award (it can be higher than that for vulnerable groups) but there must be clear evidence to support the reason for the amount awarded and it will be determined in accordance with the eligibility criteria below :

- Free School Meals eligibility assessed at the start of yr 12
- 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

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.

Use of the Bursary Fund

Funding can be used to support the student's participation in their learning programme paying towards:

- The cost of travel passes (to/from school)
- Essential books / equipment (If purchased through the school these items will be provided 'on loan' to the student and should be returned once they have completed their course of study)
- Uniform & clothing (as per 6th form dress code)
- School trips/visits/activities (if directly relevant to the course of study/learning programme)
- The cost of attendance at industry placements
- The cost of attending University Interviews and Open days
- UCAS Fees
- Vouchers or credits for meals (including school meals)
- Emergency Food (In cases of severe hardship)
- Course related protective clothing (sportswear, lab/art coats etc.)
- Examination re-sit fees

The funding **cannot** be used to support:

- Counselling or Mentoring
- Extra-curricular activities that are not essential to the student's learning programme
- Low household/family incomes
- Bonus payments for rewarding attendance or achievements
- General living costs of the student
- Block canteen subsidies
- Block equipment/book/resource provision
- Block travel subsidies

We will provide bursary awards in kind where possible and will not make flat rate bursary payments to students, without considering the actual needs of the student.

Applications

Applications should ideally be submitted by **Friday 26th September 2025** to allow enough time for schools 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.

We do acknowledge however that students' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole school year.

All applications will be assessed by a panel of 3 consisting of the following:

- **Senior leader in charge of Sixth form (AHT or Director of Sixth form)**

- **Executive Business Manager**
- **Sixth form Administrator**

The panel will meet as required to assess any applications received at the start of and during the academic year. As funds are limited there are no guaranteed awards. All awards will be allocated on the basis of the funding available at the time of the application.

A case by case needs based assessment of the individual student will be undertaken and any allowances for other additional sources of financial support will also be considered when deciding on a bursary award. Other exceptional circumstances may also be taken into account when assessing applications that do not necessarily contain the evidence requested within the previously listed requirements. Free school meals costs will be covered from the bursary funding at a maximum of **£2.75** per day based on number of meals actually taken. This is in addition to the bursary award provided to the student.

Applicants will be notified in writing (either via email or via letter) within 1 month of the deadline date (or the date of submitting their application mid-year) confirming receipt of their application and advising them whether their application has been successful or not, together with the amount of funding awarded.

Application forms are available from the **Sixth Form Office** or from the school website. All supporting evidence required must be submitted at the same time as the application forms and handed in to the 6th Form Administrator.

All application forms and documentation submitted as evidence will remain confidential and be retained for a period of 6 years.

Payment Process

Payments are made using the following process:

- The purchase of any resources/services should be made directly through the school via an order form but in some situations, it may be necessary that the student purchases the service/equipment themselves. They can be reimbursed by the school upon completion of a Bursary Claim Form (authorised by the Sixth Form Manager) supported by the production of the appropriate receipts/invoices and proof of payment being made.
- In accordance with the ESFA guidance documents, any bursary amounts awarded should be paid 'in kind' rather than as a fixed amount cash payment (unless there are exceptional circumstances)
- In the event of a cash payment being required, payments can only be made to the student's bank account and not to a third party. Bank details must therefore be completed on the application form. (The only exception to this is where a student is unable to manage/administer their own bank account. In these circumstances the School must ensure any nominated person is suitable to manage the Student's funds on their behalf)
- Any payments made to students will be made on a regular basis in arrears upon submission of an authorised claim form **and** receipt/invoice for eligible purchases.

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

- Students must maintain the levels of standards and behaviour as detailed in the Sixth Form Code of Conduct

- All deadlines for submission of work should be met
- A high level of academic attainment/commitment should be maintained throughout the period of study including punctuality and attendance at all lessons.

All students are required to sign a declaration as part of their application form 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.

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, however 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.

Appeals

All students have the right to appeal against any decision made in respect to a bursary award or non-award. **Appeals must be made in writing to the Head teacher** within 10 term time working days of the decision letter being received.

If the student wishes to appeal against the decision of the Headteacher, they may contact the Local Chair of Governors, and their appeal may be considered by the Local Governing Body whose decision will be final.

The ESFA will only get involved if there is an allegation that the criteria or content of the Bursary Fund Guide 2025/26 is being disregarded.

Changes 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

The record keeping and management of the Bursary Fund will be undertaken by the Central Trust Finance staff and this will be reviewed and assessed externally as part of the annual year end audit process (*see Appendix 2*)

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.

Monitoring/Review Arrangements

This procedure/statement will be reviewed and updated annually in accordance with the latest DfE Guidance issued during the Summer by the central Trust Business Management team.

School Contacts:

Fort Pitt Grammar School

6th Form Manager
Email: sbutton@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk

Executive Business Director:
Email: **Mrs D Zlateva**
dzlateva@beyondschools.co.uk

The Robert Napier School

6th Form Manager
Email: [Mrs M Prosser
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Executive Business Manager:
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The Thomas Aveling School

6th Form Manager : **Mrs C Wybourn and Mrs J Gibson**
Email: cwybourn@thomasaveling.co.uk
jgibson@thomasaveling.co.uk

Executive Business Manager: **Mr B Norville**
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Walderslade and Greenacre School partnership

6th Form Manager : Mr M Roberts
Email: robem008@wgsp.org.uk
Executive Business Manager: **Carly Scrivener**
Email: cscrivener@beyondschools.co.uk

Appendix 1:

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Auditors will be looking for evidence of the following as required by the ESFA:

- Total number of Applications received in the year
- Value awarded for each application
- Purpose of the funding request from the Student
- Brief justification from the School on how the individual award decision was reached (How was the student's application assessed (what criteria was used) / how was the award amount arrived upon etc.)
- The amount of unspent funds remaining and carried forward to the next academic year
- For Emergency Food Support – (Number of Students, days supplied, total value per pupil, Rationale for Award, Receipts)

Supporting documentation they will also require

- Policy/Statement on Bursary Funding
- Application Form
- Application & Assessment Process
- Copies of any signed agreements from the Student accepting the conditions of payment

And in addition, for the Vulnerable Groups: -

- Any funding claims submitted to the SBSS
- Evidence of Eligibility for the relevant category
- Evidence of any SBSS payments received (remittance advices)
- The Assessment of the individual student's financial need
- Evidence of payments made or support in-kind provided

And for the Discretionary Bursary: -

- Evidence used for eligibility & to determine household income
- The Assessment of the individual student's financial need
- Evidence of payments made (and receipts from the student) or support in-kind provided

Funds can be recovered by the ESFA if they identify any of the following failings in the schools:

- ❖ No Bursary Policy/Statement in place (or if it doesn't clearly explain the assessment criteria the school will be using and how decisions are made about the amount of support provided)
- ❖ Application forms not fit for purpose (If they do not capture all the evidence required to confirm household income and participation costs)
- ❖ Application forms not being completed annually
- ❖ Financial assessments not undertaken or based on partial/incomplete evidence
- ❖ Making Blanket or flat rate payments with considering actual individual needs
- ❖ Evidence to support household income not being retained