



WHICKHAM SCHOOL

**16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy
2025-2026**

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Policy Review

Last reviewed	By whom	Next review
July 2022	S Tumelty	by September 2023
May 2023	S Tumelty	by September 2024
July 2024	L Gainford	July 2025
July 2025	L Gainford	July 2026

1. Aims

Our school 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

2. Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on the [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guidance - GOV.UK](#)

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 body

The governing body has overall responsibility for approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, but can delegate this to a committee, an individual governor or the headteacher.

The governing body also has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

In our school, responsibility for approving this policy has been delegated to Mr F Turnbull (Headteacher) In our school, monitoring the implementation of this policy has been delegated to Miss S Tumelty (Head of Sixth Form)

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 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.

4.4 Parents

Parents are expected to notify staff or the headteacher of any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy.

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

At Whickham School we can support students with the costs of:

- School meals
- Transport
- Books
- Equipment
- Educational visits
- The costs of attending university interviews and open days

All decisions about the type of financial support offered is based on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

6. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

6.1 Age

A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025 to be eligible for help from the bursary fund in academic year 2025 to 2026.

The only exceptions for the discretionary bursary are students aged 19 and who are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or students aged 19 or over who have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plan.

These 2 groups of aged 19+ students can receive a discretionary bursary while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues, and you consider they need the support to continue their participation.

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

6.2 Eligible education provision

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (for example Ofsted). The provision must also fall into one of these groups:

- funded directly by us, or by us via a local authority
- otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by Ofqual or on our list of qualifications approved for funding

6.3 Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in DfE funding rules for post-16 provision. This document also specifies the evidence institutions must see and retain for audit to confirm eligibility for post-16 funding (and therefore meet the residency criteria for bursary fund eligibility).

6.4 Asylum seekers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Generally, asylum seekers are not entitled to public funds. Accompanied asylum seeking children (those under 18 with an adult relative or partner) and those aged 18 and above are entitled to education, but not to public funds. If they are destitute, they can apply to the Home Office (HO) for suitable housing and cash for essentials, but they are not eligible for other income.

As long as an asylum seeker has not had their application for asylum refused, you can provide in-kind student support such as books, equipment, or a travel pass. Under no circumstances can you give cash to any asylum seeker unless they are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC).

UASC do not receive cash support from the HO and are the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as looked after children and are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups ('in care' group), where they have a financial need.

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 continue to be eligible for a bursary as a student from a vulnerable group until they reach the upper upper age limit 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).

6.5 Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Students who meet the criteria, and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. The defined groups reflect that these students are unlikely to be receiving financial assistance from parents or carers, so may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate.

Students must 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.

They must not be automatically awarded £1,200.

You must be able to evidence the amount and purpose (for example, the cost of travel, the cost of essential books or equipment) of the funding you provide.

You must ensure students are eligible for the bursary for defined vulnerable groups in each year they require support.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

in care

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 (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

The managed move of legacy benefits claimants to UC means that new claims for the legacy benefits have not been possible since 2018. This means young people who are aged 16 to 18 now will not be in receipt of the legacy benefits listed above. However, any students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (such as those with an EHC plan) may still be in receipt of those other legacy benefits.

The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a student participating on a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more if they have costs that mean they need that amount of support. Students on study programmes of less than 30 weeks are not likely to need as much financial support as those on longer programmes and you must ensure you consider this in your assessment. You must also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme. A student studying for around 16 hours a week is likely to have greater costs than a student studying for 4 hours a week, for example.

Students must only receive the amount they actually need to participate, and institutions must not automatically award students £1,200, but must provide funding based on actual costs.

Although a young person may be eligible for a bursary because they are in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups, some may not have any actual financial need. This might be because their participation needs are already supported and/or because they have no relevant costs. You must refuse a student's application if they have no actual participation costs.

Equally, you can provide support to a vulnerable group student of more than £1,200 if you assess they need extra help to remain in education. Any payments over £1,200 must be paid from your discretionary bursary allocation or from your own funds. If paid from discretionary bursary, all the eligibility criteria and usual assessment processes must be met and followed. You must ensure your auditable records evidence the type, purpose, and amount of all funding awards.

Free meals in further education has its own eligibility criteria and a student who meets the criteria for a defined vulnerable group bursary is not automatically eligible for a free meal.

6.6 Discretionary bursaries

In addition to the criteria outlined above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy the following criteria:

- Entitled to receive 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:

- 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.

6.7 Evidence

You must obtain proof that students meet the criteria for the bursary for vulnerable groups in full. In other words, that they are in receipt of the specified benefits in their own name or that they fully meet the definitions for in care/care leavers. You must ask for evidence from each student and retain copies for audit purposes:

For students who are in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority – this is the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority.

For students in receipt of UC or IS, a copy of their UC or IS award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student's name/confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right. The evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training. For students in receipt of UC, you must also see a document such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bills and so on.

For students receiving UC/ESA and DLA and PIP, a copy of their UC award notice from DWP and evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP.

UC claimants can print off details of their award from their online account or provide a screenshot to the institution.

Students can also contact their UC work coach (or relevant benefit office if they are receiving IS or ESA) and ask them for help in providing evidence of receiving benefits.

You must only submit a funding claim to DfE:

- 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 help the student needs, based on the actual participation costs they have. It is the actual amount that institutions must request on the funding claim, not automatically a request of £1,200. We may require evidence, as part of our pre-payment checks, to support the amount and purpose of the funding being requested.

Following discussion with institutions and recognising both the administrative burden of handling large numbers of bursary applications in a short space of time, and the need to maximise retention of students facing financial disadvantage, you can exercise discretion as to whether you carry out household income checks annually for the discretionary bursary or just once at the beginning of a student's study programme.

If you decide not to conduct annual checks of household income eligibility for the discretionary bursary, you must ensure you obtain a signed and dated (hard copy or electronic) self-declaration form from the student to confirm that their household circumstances have not changed.

7. Application and payment process

7.1 Applications

Applications should ideally be submitted by their date of enrollment 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 whether their application has been successful, together with the type of support or funding awarded. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their application for a bursary, they must follow the school's complaints procedure.

7.2 Payment process

Payments are made using the following process:

- Make in-kind payments, such as travel passes, books, equipment or allowances for school meals
- Payments by BACS transfer to the student's bank account

7.3 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:

- Abide by the code of conduct and code of dress for Whickham School.
- Attend all timetabled sessions, as detailed on your timetable [subject to exceptional circumstances]
- Ensure you are punctual to all lessons and register your attendance by attending registration.

All students are required to sign a declaration 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 can 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.

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.

8. 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.

9. Record keeping

Any paperwork and documents we retain for audit purposes (for example, copies of application forms, household income evidence and any agreements signed by students) will be kept securely in line with our data protection policy, privacy notices and record retention schedule. All evidence is retained in a central file and archived at the end of each academic year.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by Miss L Gainford (Head of Sixth Form) every year. At every review, the policy will be approved by Mr F Turnbull (Headteacher).