



16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy

Applicable to:	✓	Seaton Valley High School
		Seaton Sluice Middle School
		Whytrig Middle School
Approval body:	Resources Committee	

Status:

Statutory policy or document	Yes
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Approval by	Governing Body to determine

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Changed by	Revision Date		
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Business Director (BW)	15 June 2026	5.0	Final approved version for publication
Business Director (BW)	29 June 2026	5.1	Clarifications throughout in line with The Key model policy (June 2026)
Business Director (BW)	23 July 2026	5.2	Updated 5.3, 6.25, 7.4 and 7.5 to widen eligibility criteria and the support provided, to ensure funds reach those students who need them most
Business Director (BW)	3 August 2026	6.0	Final approved version for publication

1 Aims

1.1 Our school aims to:

- have 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 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

2.1 This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on [the 16 to 19 bursary fund](#).

3 Definitions

3.1 '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](#))

3.2 '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](#))

3.3 'Care leaver' is defined as:

- a young person aged 16 or 17 who was previously looked after 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 (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 becoming 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

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The **governing body** has overall responsibility for approving this policy, but can delegate this to a committee, an individual governor or the Executive Headteacher. The governing body also has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy. In our school, responsibility for approving this policy and monitoring its implementation has been delegated to the Resources Committee.

4.2 The **Executive Headteacher** is responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with this policy and that it is being applied consistently.

4.3 The **Assistant Headteacher Post-16** is responsible for setting eligibility criteria for bursary funding and making sure these comply with the Equality Act 2010, and promoting awareness of the 16 to 19 bursary fund to prospective applicants and their parents/carers.

- 4.4 The **Finance Manager** is responsible for reviewing applications and supporting evidence in accordance with this policy.
- 4.5 The **Business Director** is responsible for ensuring that the bursary funding is accounted for accurately.
- 4.6 Our **staff** are responsible for implementing this policy consistently. The Senior Leadership Team will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.
- 4.7 **Parents/carers** are expected to notify staff or the Executive Headteacher of any concerns or queries regarding this policy, or any change in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding.

5 How we use the bursary fund

- 5.1 Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund.
- 5.2 The fund is intended to support students aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.
- 5.3 There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:
- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
 - Discretionary bursaries
- 5.4 We use the fund to provide students with support for books, course equipment, independent study tools, transport, curriculum-related trips and UCAS application fees.
- 5.5 We will provide support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible.
- 5.6 The bursary fund is not for non-education related costs. For example, it will not be provided for:
- general living costs
 - non-essential extra-curricular activities
 - any learning support and pastoral services that we provide
- 5.7 The bursary fund may be used to provide exceptional further help with childcare costs if the costs exceed the Care to Learn scheme's weekly maximum rates. Childcare provision must meet Care to Learn scheme eligibility rules, and evidence will be required that the maximum amount is already paid through that scheme and a top up is required. Any top up will be made in line with Care to Learn funding rules and go directly to the childcare provider, not the student.

6 Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

- 6.1 It should be noted that the following eligibility criteria will be assessed in addition to the individual student's actual financial needs. This means there is no guarantee of funding. In particular:
- 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.

Age

- 6.2 To be eligible for either bursary, students must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August of that academic year.
- 6.3 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 (19+ continuers), or
 - have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- 6.4 Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 Students aged under 19 enrolled on higher education qualifications are not eligible for support from the 16 to 19 bursary fund.

Eligible Education Provision

- 6.7 Students' provision must be subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into one of these groups:
- funded directly by the DfE or by the DfE via a local authority
 - otherwise publicly funded and leads 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
- 6.8 Students are not eligible if they are on an apprenticeship programme or are participating in any waged training.
- 6.9 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

- 6.10 Students must meet the residency criteria in the [DfE funding regulations for post-16 provision](#).

Asylum Seekers

- 6.11 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.

6.12 We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum seekers who have not had asylum refused.

6.13 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

6.14 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

6.15 Students with a financial need, who meet one of the following four criteria in addition to the criteria outlined above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

6.16 The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- in care (N.B. those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after and are not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups)
- care leavers (N.B. where a young person has left the care of the local authority via achieving permanence through an order, such as a Special Guardianship Order, they are a care leaver; they must meet the definition of a care leaver in full to be eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups)
- 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 (N.B. 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)

6.17 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.

6.18 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.

6.19 Students who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups (and therefore classed as 'Priority 1' for the purposes of this scheme) are not automatically entitled to a bursary.

6.20 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.

- 6.21 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 base 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.
- 6.22 We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, and provide more than £1,200 per year if such 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.
- 6.23 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 need 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.
- 6.24 We will review each 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

- 6.25 In addition to the criteria outlined above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy one or more of the following criteria:
- Eligible for Free School Meals (classed as 'Priority 2' for the purposes of this scheme)
 - Gross household income is under £32,000 per year (classed as 'Priority 3')
 - Gross household income is under £38,000 per year AND lives outside of Seaton Valley or faces travel costs exceeding £15 per week (classed as 'Priority 4')
- 6.26 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.
- 6.27 In assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:
- level of household income
 - eligibility for Free School Meals
 - distance to travel between the student's home and school
 - the requirements of their study programme
 - whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help
- 6.28 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.
- 6.29 We will review each student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a discretionary bursary if they continue to satisfy the

criteria.

Emergency Meal and Travel Support

- 6.30 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.
- 6.31 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.

7 Application and payment process

Applications

- 7.1 Applications should ideally be submitted by the end of the second week in September to allow enough time for our school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. The actual deadline date will be clearly stated on the application form.
- 7.2 However, we acknowledge that students' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole school year.
- 7.3 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 federation's Complaints Procedure.

Evidence

- 7.4 All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence. Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:
- a copy of the UC or IS award notice from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) showing the full breakdown for the three most recent assessment periods 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
 - proof of gross household income, such as three recent monthly payslips, a P60 for the latest tax year, or an SA302 / Tax Return for self-employed parents/carers
 - proof of travel costs, such as distance calculations, travel route logs, or public transport ticket pricing for out-of-catchment travel

Payment Process

- 7.5 Depending on the reason the bursary was awarded and the student's circumstances, support is provided using the following processes:

- **In-kind provision:** Purchasing course textbooks, workbooks, graphic calculators, and independent study assets (e.g. study headphones) directly on the student's behalf
- **Direct transport provision:** Purchasing annual public transport season passes directly from transport providers on the student's behalf
- **Direct travel reimbursement:** Reimbursing approved travel costs, annual public transport season passes or mileage logs by BACS transfer on production of a receipt or approved route/expense evidence
- **Automated fee and trip clearance:** Direct internal transfers to cover 100% of costs for mandatory curriculum field trips, theatre visits, and UCAS/university application fees
- **Chromebook loan pool:** Loan of a school-owned chromebook for the duration of the student's 16 to 19 study programme where a digital need is identified; devices remain the property of the school and must be returned upon completion of studies

Conditions for the Receipt of Bursary Payments

- 7.6 Payments of the bursary are conditional on students meeting the expected standards of attendance and behaviour.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 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.
- 7.9 We reserve the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.
- 7.10 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

- 8.1 If there are changes in circumstances which may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers must notify the school without delay.

9 Record keeping

- 9.1 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 the federation's Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notices, and Record Keeping and Retention Policy, provided on request.