Sir Roger Manwood's School

16-19 Bursary Policy

Date of Approval: September 2026

Date of Next Review: September 2027

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation so they can remain in education and training. The school has received this funding to help students meet the cost of participating in post-16 education and training. This policy is based on the DfE's *16-19 Bursary Fund Guide for 2026 to 2027 Academic Year*.

General Eligibility and Awards Criteria

To be eligible to receive a Bursary in the 2026/27 academic year, all young people must be aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31 August 2027, meet the residence criteria in the EFA Funding Guidance for 2026/27 Academic Year and attend suitable provision subject to inspection by a public body. In exceptional circumstances we may pay bursaries to younger students, for example, where a student is following an accelerated study programme. These exceptions will be at the discretion of the Bursary awarding panel.

Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).These 2 groups of students aged 19+ 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 their institution considers they need the support to continue their participation.

Accompanied asylum-seeking children (under 18 with an adult relative or partner) are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funding via the 16 to 19 Bursary.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (under 18) are considered as Looked After Children and are eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups ('in care' group) where they have a financial need. Once they reach 18, if their asylum claim is considered favourably, they continue to be eligible for a bursary from the vulnerable group until they reach the upper age limit. If an asylum claim is not supported and the appeals process is exhausted there is no further entitlement to the bursary unless withdrawal of support would be seen as a breach of human rights.

In individual cases of severe hardship, in line with Government guidance, we may use our bursary funds to provide meal support to a student who is considered in to be in real need and who is present in school attending their study programme. In this circumstance we will not undertake the checks on household income or gather the evidence that is normally required.

Eligibility

If the minimum criteria are met and there is a financial need there are two types of bursary that students can apply for, each with specific eligibility criteria:

1. Vulnerable Bursary – which is available to defined vulnerable groups

2. Discretionary Bursary – awarded in line with government funding rules

Eligibility for Vulnerable Bursary – up to a max of £1,200 per annum

Vulnerable groups are defined as students who are:

- In care (Appendix 1 - definition)
- Care leavers (Appendix 1 – definition)
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit **in their own name**
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments **in their own name** as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

Evidence will need to be provided to support applications for eligibility for a vulnerable group bursary and this must be retained for audit purposes.

Examples of acceptable evidence includes:

- for students who are in care or are 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 Income Support or Universal Credit (UC), a copy of their Income Support or UC 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, institutions must also see a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates and utility bills
- for students receiving UC/ESA and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, a copy of their UC claim from DWP. Evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment must also be provided

(UC claimants can print off details of their award from their online account. UC has now fully rolled out and so young people aged 16 to 18 will no longer be in receipt of the benefits listed above. However, students over the age of 19 and eligible for funding may still be in receipt of legacy benefits.)

When evidence has been seen and verified to confirm eligibility for the bursary for vulnerable groups and the financial help needed to participate has been fully assessed then a funding claim will be submitted to Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) online portal: (https://studentbursary.education.gov.uk/w/webpage/1619bursary)

It may be that a young person might meet the eligibility criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups but their financial needs are already met, they have no relevant costs or do not need the maximum award e.g.:

- a student in the care of the local authority whose educational costs are covered in full by the local authority
- a student who is financially supported by their partner

If this is the case, then the panel may refuse the student's application after considering the individual circumstances. The student will be provided with an explanation as to why they are not awarding any bursary (because the student has no financial needs) or why they are being awarded a reduced amount (because the financial help needed is limited).

Eligibility for a Discretionary Bursary

Subject to the availability of remaining funds and meeting criteria, a Discretionary Bursary may be available for students who need financial help to overcome specific financial barriers to participation but who do not qualify for a vulnerable group bursary. Uses could include:

- towards the cost of some or all travel to and from school
- towards the cost of food in school
- to buy essential books, equipment, specialist clothing related to the programme of study
- travel to university open days
- unforeseen expenses to enable access to course materials or fund/part-fund course activities.

The Discretionary Bursary is not to support extra-curricular activities that are not essential to the students' programme of study.

Eligibility will be assessed for every year that a student requires support and awards are made dependent upon individual circumstances and actual financial need. They will vary depending upon household income, the distance travelled to school and mode of transport as well as the requirements of their specific programme of study. Checking household income is consistent with that for free meals in further education, this means a single check must be carried out for each phase of education in the school. Annually after the initial check a self-declaration form can be completed and returned by the student to confirm that their household circumstances have not changed.

Evidence, which must be from the last 3 calendar months, will be used by the panel to assess eligibility. Priority is likely to be given to applications that include evidence that the student is:

- Living in a household that is in receipt of means tested benefit e.g. Universal Credit (See Appendix 2), Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment & Support Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit
- In receipt of free school meals (Y11 and/or Y12)
- Universal Credit (statements from the last 3 months) are likely to be your best source of evidence of income

Applications, including evidence, from students living in a household where the gross annual income is:

- Less than £25,500 per annum
- Less that £27,000 per annum if a family is in receipt of Child Benefit for more than one child
- Less than £28,500 per annum if a family is in receipt of Child Benefit for two or more children attending SRMS

may also qualify for a Discretionary Bursary if the funds are available.

For more information on taxable income go to www.gov.uk/income-tax/taxfree-and-taxablestate-benefits

At the discretion of the awarding panel, an application and accompanying evidence will be considered from any student who does not fall under the categories listed above, but who considers themselves to be in financial hardship that is limiting their ability to participate in their programme of study. Similarly, if a student who qualifies for a Vulnerable Bursary has used their maximum of £1,200 they may also be considered for an additional Discretionary Bursary award if they have financial need and there are funds available.

Collectively the discretionary awards will be managed to keep within budget. Up to 5% of the total allocation will be retained as an emergency fund for allocations that need to be made during the year for students who face exceptional circumstances that impact on their ability to participate. Additionally, up to 5% of the total budget will be retained by the school towards administration costs.

Awarding of a Bursary

Any bursary to be awarded will be done so with the sole purpose of helping a student with the actual costs of participating in their programme of study. It will be determined by the panel after consideration of:

- a copy of the student's individual assessment of actual financial need (as detailed in their application)
- evidence of this financial need
- the nature and details of the request.

It may be paid:

- in full or instalments
- in cash, by cheque or to a student's bank account
- as items e.g. a travel pass, free meals, books or equipment

NB: Where items are purchased for a student using a Bursary award the award may be on the condition that the item is returned to the school when the student leaves.

All awards will be made direct to the student concerned, not to their parents or carers.

Where the award is received in instalments, to continue to receive the bursary the student must:

- have no unauthorised and unexplained absences from lessons
- abide by the expectations set out in the Student Learning Agreement

Application Process

Students should electronically complete the 16-19 Bursary Fund Application Form (Appendix 3) and submit it to Info@srms.kent.sch.uk along with copies of their evidence of financial need. The application should explain:

- which type of bursary is being applied for
- why they think they are eligible
- what the bursary is required for
- how much each requested element is anticipated to cost

The application should also contain:

- evidence of eligibility (as detailed under the bursary headings)
- details of the student's bank account (sort code/account number/bank & branch name)

Applications for bursaries may be submitted at any time. However, the Student Grant Panel (Student Grant Governor and Head of Sixth Form) will convene (if necessary) to consider applications 3 times per year (around end of September, end of January and end of March). In the rare event of receiving an emergency application (likely to be under the category of Discretionary Bursary) the panel may consider an application outside of this time.

It should be noted that:

- applications to be considered at a panel meeting should be submitted by the 20th of the month in question
- applications cannot be considered until the student is actually on roll at our school and has attended school in the current academic year they are applying for

Applications made after the initial panel meeting, held in the Autumn term, will only be considered if there is funding available.

To maintain eligibility for a bursary across the academic year a student must:

- have no unauthorised and unexplained absences from lessons
- abide by the expectations set out in the Student Learning Agreement

If these conditions are not met, then the Bursary may be withdrawn or repayment/partial repayment expected.

Appendix 1

Defining in care and care leavers

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund defines ‘in care’ 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) - Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term ‘looked after child’.’

A ‘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

Foster care, including privately arranged foster care

A young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, is classed as looked after. They meet the criteria for the ‘in care’ vulnerable group where they need financial support to participate.

A child who is privately fostered (in other words, a private arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the child) is not classed as a looked after child and is not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups.

In some instances, a young person may have been in the care of the local authority and the care transferred to another party via a permanent form of fostering such as a Special Guardianship Order. In these circumstances, the young person is defined as having left care so is now a care leaver. They must meet the definition of a ‘care leaver’ in full (so, the period of weeks and age range set out above). If they do, they are eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups, where they need financial support to participate.

Universal Credit

UC has replaced IS and ESA as well as other benefits. UC award notifications do not include any information on the benefits they replace.

For this reason, the description of the bursaries for vulnerable group category that relates to receipt of UC or IS is that a student must be receiving UC in their own right because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.

Bursary funds awarded to a student should not form part of the UC assessment undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). How DWP treat any funding for education depends on whether the student is undertaking advanced full-time education. It is unlikely that 16 to 18 year olds will be in advanced full-time education as they are generally on study programmes at level 3 or below. Since full role out of UC, any current and future 16 to 18-year-old can only claim UC, they can no longer claim IS or income related ESA.

Under UC, any educational award which is paid under a scheme to enable persons under age 21 to complete a course of non-advanced education (which will clearly include the 16 to 19 Bursary) is not treated as grant income for UC purposes – as provided under reg 68(7) of the UC Regulations 2013.

UC award notifications do not include any information on the benefits they replace. For this reason, the description of the bursaries for the vulnerable group category that relates to receipt of UC or Income Support is that a student must be receiving UC in their own right because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner.

Appendix 2

Using household income and establishing individual student need

Institutions must ensure their bursary policy ensures funding reaches those students who are most in need of financial support. This means institutions should use household income in some way to help establish the amount of support they award to a student. This can be used in conjunction with other factors, such as distance to travel from the institution and the number of dependent children in the household, as well as the actual participation needs the student has.

It is for institutions to decide the process they use to assess household income, and the specific evidence they request from students/their families. However, DfE is aware that some institutions are unsure about how to use UC award notices when these are provided as evidence of household income. DfE suggests institutions may wish to ask for the 3 most recent monthly award statements. The take-home pay figure in addition to the amount of UC after all deductions will give a total monthly income. Using 3 months' statements will act as a guide to the household income for a quarter of a year. Institutions could then estimate assumed income for a full year.

A link to an examplar UC award notice is given below. The notice shows the two highlighted figures – one for take-home pay and one for the amount of UC after deductions – that should be added together to give a monthly total.

Example of a Universal Credit monthly award notice
PDF, 390KB, 1 page

Appendix 3

16 to 19 Bursary Application Form 2026 - 2027

Please complete this form as fully as possible and return it electronically along with your supporting evidence to m.stedman@srms.kent.sch.uk

Name:

Date of birth:

Form:

Date of application:

I am applying for (please tick):

A Vulnerable Bursary ☐

A Discretionary Bursary ☐

(Note to be eligible for a Vulnerable Bursary, the UC statements should be in **your** name; if the UC statements are in your parents' name then you are only eligible for a Discretionary Bursary).

EVIDENCE - list the evidence that you are attaching to support your application e.g. a copy of Universal Credit (UC) statements for the last 3 months, etc.

COSTS - please identify what you need a Bursary for and how much each aspect you identify will cost e.g. travel by bus – annual pass £650, travel by train monthly pass £57.50, text book £27.50:

BANK ACCOUNT - give details below of the bank account into which a Bursary award should be paid. (Note that this account must belong to **you** as an award cannot be transferred to anyone else, parent or otherwise).

Name of Bank:

Account name:

Sort code:

Account number:

DECLARATION - to the best of my knowledge, all of the above information is true and accurate.

Signature of applicant:

NB: To maintain eligibility for a Bursary you must have no unauthorised and/or unexplained absences from lessons and you must abide by the expectations set out in the Student Learning Agreement. A Bursary may be withdrawn or repayment requested if this is not the case.