Grace Academy Coventry

16 – 19 Bursary Fund Policy

Policy Reference:	BUR09
Version:	V3
Status	Operational
Authors	Principal/ School Business Manager/ Head of Sixth Form
Applicable to	Grace Academy Coventry
Checked by	Local Governing Body
Valid From	September 2026
Review Date	September 2027

Contents

1. Aims 2
2. Guidance 2
3. Definitions 2
4. Roles and responsibilities 2
4.1 The governing board 2
4.2 The Principal 2
4.3 Staff 3
4.4 Parents 3
5. How we use the bursary fund 3
6. Eligibility criteria 3
6.1 Age 3
6.2 Eligible education provision 3
6.3 Residency 4
6.4 Asylum seekers 4
6.5 Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups 4
6.6 Discretionary bursaries 5
7. Payment 6
7.1 Process 6
7.2 Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments 6
8. Monitoring arrangements 6

1. Aims

Our Academy 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

2. Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2026-to-2027

3. Definitions

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).

The term 'looked after child' is defined in section 22 of the Children Act 1989.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund defines a care leaver as either a young person aged:

- 16 and 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 do not need to have entered care after their 14th birthday to be eligible, 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
- 18 or above who was looked after before turning 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 board

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

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

In our Academy, responsibility for approving the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy has been delegated to the Principal.

4.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

4.3 Staff

Our staff are responsible for implementing the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently.

The Academy Leadership team will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation. The ALT member responsible for 6th Form will manage this process.

4.4 Parents

Parents are expected to notify the Head of Sixth Form, ALT link responsible for Sixth Form or the Principal with any concerns or queries regarding the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy.

5. How we use the bursary fund

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 barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

We use the fund to provide students with support for:

- Transport
- Books
- Equipment
- Uniform
- Field trips and other course-related costs
- The costs of attending university interviews and open days
- Individual requests for other types of support may be considered

6. Eligibility criteria

6.1 Age

To be eligible:

- A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2026
- Students 19 or over must either:
- Be continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18, or
- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

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

Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed, rather than in education. They are not eligible for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.

Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme are eligible to receive the bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course.

We do not expect students on distance learning provision to need help from the bursary fund because they do not have the kinds of costs the bursary is intended to cover (travel, equipment, and uniforms, for example). In the rare instances where an institution identifies such a student does require financial help, they should provide support in-kind. An example could be providing a temporary travel pass for the student to attend exams.

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

Accompanied asylum seeking children (under 18 with an adult relative or partner)

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).

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

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 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).

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 assessing an application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the institution
- The number of dependent children in the student's household
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help
- Students individual/exceptional circumstances

To assess household income, we will ask to see:

- Proof of benefits letters
- Tax credit award notifications
- P60s
- Pay slips
- Bank statements covering a certain period (e.g. the last 3 months)
- Universal Credit award notices (e.g. the most recent 3)

7. Payment

7.1 Process

The Academy will base all decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary and how much bursary they receive on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. These will vary from student to student. The Academy will not make bursary fund payments as regular payments for living costs as this is out of the scope of the bursary fund.

- The academy will use payment in kind wherever possible, for example course material, travel passes and trip costs. Students will need to itemise their requirements, seek approval from the Academy prior to any purchase and provide receipts as evidence.
- Where payments in kind are not possible, the Academy will make use of BACS transfer for payment.

Applications should ideally be submitted by mid October to make sure enough time is allocated to assess the overall level of demands and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. This date will be clearly stated on the application form. However, as students' circumstances may change, the application process will remain open for the whole school year.

7.2 Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

Payments are conditional on students meeting the following:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Code of Conduct and Behaviour

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.

We will consider the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

8. Monitoring arrangements

The ALT member responsible for Sixth Form will oversee the operation of the Bursary Fund, and establish clear monitoring of its operations through the Academy management structure.

This policy, and its operation, will be reviewed by the Academy Leadership Team/Governors at the end of the academic year.