BFLPT

Brighter Futures Learning Partnership Trust

16-19 BURSARY FUND POLICY

VERSION 3

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PURPOSE OF THE BURSARY FUND

The 16–19 Bursary Fund is a financial grant provided by the Department for Education (DfE) to reduce the financial barriers that may prevent young people from engaging fully in post-16 education. The fund is designed to ensure that eligible students, particularly those from vulnerable groups and lower-income households, are able to start, attend, and successfully complete their programmes of study. Support may be provided towards the essential costs of learning, including transport, meals, specialist clothing or equipment, digital access, and curriculum-related trips or activities. The bursary can also be used to provide targeted financial support in cases of unexpected hardship, safeguarding participation and progression. In line with DfE requirements, bursary funds must be allocated transparently, fairly, and consistently, with awards linked to overcoming clearly identified barriers to learning rather than providing general spending money.

ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Discretionary 16-19 Bursary Fund

Students who do not meet the criteria for the Vulnerable Student Bursary may apply for support from the Discretionary 16–19 Bursary Fund. Applications should normally be made at the start of the academic year; however, students experiencing a change in financial circumstances during the year may also apply. Awards are intended to help meet the cost of:

- Transport to and from school/college
- Essential learning resources, including books, equipment, and digital devices
- Specialist clothing or uniform linked to a chosen course
- Curriculum-related trips and enrichment activities that support learning

Eligibility for discretionary bursaries is based on household income and individual need, with priority given to students whose family income is below the locally set threshold (normally £25,000 per year, in line with DfE recommendations). Evidence of household income will be required to assess applications, and awards may be provided as cash payments, contributions in kind (such as travel passes or equipment), or a combination of both.

Applications are assessed on a **case-by-case** basis to ensure that funds are used effectively to support participation, retention, and achievement.

Late Applications

Students joining the academy after 1st September are required to submit their application for the Discretionary Bursary within 6 weeks of their enrolment date. Applications submitted after this period will be assessed on an individual basis.

Further information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

Who is Eligible?
Bursaries can only be paid to students that meet the Department for Education's age and residency criteria. There are two types of available bursary awards:

VULNERABLE STUDENT BURSARY

A fixed award to students who fall within the following criteria:

- Young people in care
- Young people who have left care (care leaver)
- Students receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit 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
- Students receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

For students qualifying for a Vulnerable Student Bursary, the school/UTC will receive a maximum fixed award of £1,200 (which will be pro-rated for any students starting later in the course), payable over the duration of the course. The school/ UTC will agree with the student how the award can be used to support them.

The criteria for the award are set by the Department for Education and must be strictly adhered to. Proof must be provided to the school/UTC to confirm eligibility for this award.

Funding claims window: (subject to change based on DfE guidance)

Initial claims	From 1st September until 31st October	Payments received in March
New claims	Until 31st January	Payments received in May
Final claims and reconciliations	Until 31st May	Payments received in October

DISCRETIONARY AWARDS

These awards are more flexible and can be awarded to any student deemed eligible by the school/UTC. The eligibility for this award is set by each individual school/UTC, so neighbouring schools may have slightly different eligibility criteria.

Some awards require the student to be eligible for free school meals (FSM). All Post 16 students who believe they are eligible for FSM need to apply at the start of each academic year, so at the start of both year 12 and year 13.

The Headteacher/Principal may make discretionary payments to students who, through no fault of their own, experience disadvantage as a result of unforeseen circumstances. This provision is designed to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities, even when facing unexpected challenges.

Examples of situations that may lead to students becoming disadvantaged include, but are not limited to:

- **Sudden Family Illness or Bereavement**: If a student's family faces a serious illness or death of a close relative, it can cause emotional and financial hardship, which may affect the student's ability to participate in their studies.
- **Unexpected Financial Hardship**: A sudden loss of employment or a major change in the family's financial situation can create barriers to accessing resources, such as uniforms, travel costs, or essential learning materials.
- **Unforeseen Housing Issues**: Circumstances such as sudden eviction, homelessness, or the need to relocate can disrupt a student's ability to maintain focus and continuity in their education.

The decision to make such payments will be guided by the principles outlined in the ***Brighter Futures Learning Partnership Trust Financial Support Policy***. The policy ensures that any discretionary support given is fair, transparent, and used to assist students in overcoming specific barriers that hinder their ability to succeed in their educational journey. Students and their families are encouraged to discuss any issues that may impact their education with the school leadership to explore available options for support.

All applicants must provide information on their household income, so that an assessment of need can be undertaken.

WHAT KIND OF ASSISTANCE CAN A STUDENT APPLY FOR?

Travel

The principal assistance provided to students is to cover excessive transport costs to and from the designated school/UTC. We will only support the **cheapest form of return travel to the designated school/UTC by public transport.**

We expect all students or their parents/carers to contribute towards the cost of travel. The South Yorkshire Zoom 16-18 Travel Pass caps a single fare on Bus and Tram to £1 (Zoom 16-18 Travel Pass - Travel South Yorkshire) . Travel costs by rail or bus in excess of this can be claimed from the Bursary Fund.

Payments will be made monthly on receipt of the complete online forms that will be sent to students by the Director of Post-16.

Students will be asked to provide evidence of the expenditure, such as a used ticket, so that the ongoing need for support can be verified. Failure to provide

this evidence will delay payment of the bursary. Should attendance in the academic year fall below 95%, the school/UTC may reduce the amount paid or not approve payment to reflect attendance.

Applications for travel bursaries should be made within 6 weeks of the student's start date at the school/UTC. If bus or rail fares increase during the year, the school/UTC will reflect this in the payments made provided there is sufficient funds to do so.

OTHER SUPPORT

Students in households where the total income is below £25,000 including students on Free School Meals, may also apply for additional support in the following areas:

- Clothing and footwear for sport
- Books, materials and equipment needed to complete the chosen course
- Emergency accommodation and meals
- Course trips
- Interviews and Open days at universities (travel costs to and from the university)

Awards are payable to the student and will be settled to their bank account on receipt of evidence of the expenditure incurred.

PROOF OF INCOME

All applications must be accompanied by proof of income, this allows the school/ UTC to conform with the requirements laid out by the Department for Education in providing funds to us. The application form asks for details of any income earnt by the student and up to 2 persons in the household.

To support the application, we will ask you to provide as evidence one of the following for each person:

- A P60 for the latest full tax year
- Annual Tax Summary issued by HMRC for last full tax year
- Last three months' wage or salary slips
- Benefit Entitlement Letter
- Copy of a Universal Credit online statement
- SA302 Tax Calculation Form
- Certified accounts, if self-employed.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

All FSM applications should be made using the free LGfL FSM eligibility checker or the UTC can perform the check on behalf of parents/carers if requested. NOTE: additional personal information will be requested if you require the UTC to carry out the FSM eligibility check.

Please remember that if you believe you are eligible you must apply at the start of each academic year.

The Bursary Application form is emailed out monthly by the Director of Post-16.

Requests for other support should be submitted as the need arises.

How long will it take for my application to be considered?
Applications are considered as soon as possible after receipt, but within a month at the very most.

Applications are considered by the Headteacher/Principal. Any information provided as part of the application process will be confidential and treated with sensitivity.

Doncaster UTC will determine payment of the award and the Principal's decision will be final. If further information is needed to support the application, a letter will be sent requesting this before a decision can be made.

16-19 Bursary Fund Policy Version 3 agreed by Trust Board September 2026