



# Wigston College

## 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy

<b>DATE APPROVED:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	Board of Trustees
<b>REVIEW FREQUENCY:</b>	Every 2 years
<b>DATE FOR REVIEW:</b>	May 2028

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. M. W.', is positioned above the signature line.

Signed by Chair of Trustees:

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026

## **Contents**

1. Aims and scope
2. Guidance
3. Definitions
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. How we use the bursary fund
6. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries
7. Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups
8. Discretionary bursaries
9. Application and payment process
10. Change in circumstances
11. Record keeping and audit
12. Unspent funds
13. Monitoring arrangements

## 1. Aims and scope

The 16 to 19 bursary fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries and this policy refers to both:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
- Discretionary bursaries

This policy aims to:

- Set out 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/carers and students the type of support that is available and how to apply for it
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

## 2. Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on the [16 to 19 bursary fund for the 2025 to 2026 academic year](#).

## 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 or 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 board

The governing board has overall responsibility for

- Approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy

- › Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- › Ensuring compliance with relevant requirements

#### **4.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- › Making sure that staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- › Making sure the policy is being applied consistently
- › Setting eligibility criteria for bursary funding and making sure these comply with the Equality Act 2010.
- › Promoting awareness of the 16 to 19 bursary fund to prospective applicants and their parents/carers. The P16 team will also support this.

#### **4.3 Bursary panel**

The bursary panel is responsible for reviewing applications and supporting evidence in accordance with this policy.

The panel consists of:

- › Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Post 16 administrator who will liaise with the finance team.

#### **4.4 College business manager/bursar/head of finance**

- › The Headteacher/Director Learning for Post 16 is responsible for ensuring that the bursary funding is accounted for accurately.

#### **4.5 Staff**

- › Our staff are responsible for implementing this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently.

#### **4.6 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are also expected to notify staff or the headteacher of:

- › Any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- › Any change in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding

#### **4.7 Students**

Students are responsible for meeting the conditions attached to the receipt of any support from the bursary funding.

### **5. How we use the bursary fund**

Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See sections 6, 7 and 8 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 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

We use the fund to provide students with support to fund:

- Transport
- Books
- Equipment such as folders, paper, highlighters, revision cards, art materials etc.
- Field trips that are essential to the course and other course related costs
- Costs of attending university interviews or open days
- Specialist clothing such as A Level PE or OCR Sport kit
- Emergency meal support

We will provide support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible. It will not be provided as regular payments for living costs.

## 6. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

**Please note:** the following eligibility criteria will be assessed **in addition** to the individual student's actual financial needs. This means:

- 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

### 6.1 Age

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2025 to 2026 academic year, students must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August 2025.

Students aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary (see section 6.6 below) if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18 years old (19+ continuers)
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

**NB:** Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.

Students aged under 19 enrolled on higher education qualifications are not eligible for support from the 16-19 bursary fund.

### 6.2 Eligible education provision

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Be funded directly by the DfE, or by the DfE via a local authority
- Be otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is on the DfE's [list of qualifications](#)

Students are not eligible if:

- They are on an apprenticeship programme
- They are participating in any waged training

### 6.3 Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the [DfE funding rules for 16 to 19 provision](#).

### 6.4 Asylum seekers

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.

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

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

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.

## 7. Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Students with a financial need, who meet 1 of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1 to 6.4 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (N.B. those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after)
- 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 (PIPs) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

UC has replaced IS, as well as other benefits above, for current and future young people aged 16 to 18. However, students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (such as students with an EHC plan) may still receive the legacy benefits listed above.

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.

Students who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are **not automatically entitled** to a bursary.

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.

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 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.

We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to provide more than £1,200 per year if it is necessary, in all the circumstances, for the student to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from the college's discretionary bursary allocation or the college's own funds.

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 request 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.

We will review the 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.

## **8. Discretionary bursaries**

In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1 to 6.4 above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy 1 or more of the following criteria:

- Parents/carers earn less than £30,000 a year.
- Parent /carers are not working and are in receipt of non-working benefits such as Income Support / Job Seekers Allowance / Universal credit.
- Parents/carers are employed or self-employed and have a take home pay of less than £30,000 after deductions but do not claim any top up benefits.
- National asylum seeker support
- Universal credit with annual net earned income of less than £7,400
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

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 still apply for a discretionary bursary.

In assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income
- 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.

**NB:** Bursary applications from students that are part of a household whose income is above £30,000 will not be considered for financial support through the 16-19 bursary fund.

## 9. Application and payment process

### 9.1 Applications

Applications forms should be submitted to the Post 16 Administrator in the Sixth Form Hub

Applications should ideally be submitted by **September 18th** to allow enough time for our college 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 college year.

All applications will be considered and assessed by the panel and students will be notified of the initial decision within 21 working days of receipt of the application.

If an application is rejected, individuals have the right to appeal and/or complain to the sixth Form Team if you feel that the case has not been given fair consideration. This must be in writing.

The final decision rests with the College.

Any enquiries about the application process should be directed to [admin@wigstoncollege.org](mailto:admin@wigstoncollege.org) with bursary enquiry as the subject.

### Emergencies and hardship

Students might be able to get more support if circumstances change or they have an emergency.

Under exceptional circumstances students who are not automatically eligible for an award can also apply for help with one off course related expenses (proof of income or hardship will be asked for). Applications for additional help will be considered on an individual basis and is dependent upon available funds.

### 9.2 Evidence

All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence, which we will verify. 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) 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
- Recent entitlement or award statement setting out the benefit to which the Student is entitled. This should also confirm that they can be in education or training.

If your parents/carers are in receipt of Child Tax Credit and or Working Tax credit we will need:

- The latest Tax Credit award letter. This must be dated April 2025 or later. ALL pages must be provided. If only partial pages are provided, this is likely to delay your application.

If your parents/carers are in receipt of Universal Credit you need to provide their last 3 monthly statements. We need to see the actual statements and not just the summary of payments. In order to obtain the statements they will need to:

- Log in to their Universal Credit online account
- Go to 'Payments'
- Click on the payment dates for the last 3 months and save each statement as a pdf or capture a series of screen shots if doing from a smartphone (pdf is better if you can)

### **9.3 Payment process**

#### **Payments are made using the following process:**

When a student wishes to use part of their bursary allocation, they must fill out a claim form obtained from student reception. Once this has been signed off by a member of the Sixth Form Team the student can purchase the agreed item or items. The receipt for this must then be attached to the claim form at which point the College will reimburse the student with said funds. If a student does not have the finances to make the purchase in the first instance, then speak to a member of the Sixth Form Team. All student bursaries will be paid via BACS directly into a student's bank account on proof of receipt of items purchased.

Bursaries may be allocated in any of the following ways, depending upon needs and circumstances:

- Free/subsidised meals;
- Help with transport costs;
- Help with books, kit and equipment;
- Help with Educational visits and trips, including University open days and interviews.
- Or a combination of the above

**NB:** Cash payments will not be made in any circumstances.

### **9.4 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:

- They must aim to maintain a 97% attendance.
- There must be no unauthorised absences during the college/college day or persistent lateness.
- They must maintain acceptable levels of behaviour, as outlined in the Home College Learner Agreement.
- Follow and comply with the college code of conduct/Home Learning agreement
- Receipts for expenditure and purchases made with the bursary funding and the appropriate form are provided to Miss Goyns in the Post 16 Hub for approval and processing. are provided to

#### **Attendance Requirements**

- Students will only receive bursary funding if they meet the College's attendance requirements. The only exceptions to this rule include the following:

- Medical Procedure or illness supported by a Doctor's Certificate, Hospital letter or letter from parents/carer.
- Hospital Appointment (a hospital documentation or note/email or phone call from parent or carer).
- University Interview (evidence of this will need to be provided).
- University Open Day (evidence of this will need to be provided).
- College Trip Excursion.
- Official College Closure i.e. snow day.

**Students will NOT receive bursary funding if they use any of the following as verification of absence:**

- Dentist appointment
- Any other form of self-certification
- College exclusion
- Unauthorised family holidays
- Lateness to college affecting lesson attendance

There may be occasions when cases have to be looked at on an individual basis and at the discretion of the Sixth Form Team whose decision will be final. An example of these could include any of the following, although this list is not in-depth:

- Theory and Practical Driving Test.
- Family/close friend's funeral.

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.

If students have received in-kind support such as equipment or travel cards, they will be asked to return these if they fail to meet the conditions.

We will stop payments 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.

## **10. Change in circumstances**

If there are changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers **must** notify the college without delay.

## **11. Record keeping and audit**

The college will maintain comprehensive and accurate records relating to the 16 to 19 bursary fund. These records will be kept securely and be readily available for audit purposes. Records will include, but are not limited to:

- Copies of application forms and supporting evidence
- Proof that students meet eligibility criteria
- Records of 'zero bursary' students
- Details of assessment decisions and rationale for awards
- Records of all payments made to students, including dates, value and purpose
- Copies of documents signed by students to give formal agreement to the conditions of payment
- Evidence of student attendance and progress monitoring

Records will be retained for 6 academic years after the end of the academic year in which the student completed their programme.

## **12. Unspent funds**

Funding for bursary funding cannot be carried forward by the college for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the DfE by the college using the [customer help centre](#), specifying the amount of funding and the year(s) it relates to, no later than 31 March each year. The DfE will recover all unspent funds.

## **13. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be monitored by the Headteacher.

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.

## **14. Complaints or Appeals**

Where any student or parent is unhappy with how we have managed their application for bursary funding or the support that has been provided, they are free to make a complaint or appeal as per the colleges Complaints Policy.