16 to 19 BURSARY FUND STATEMENT 2026-27

The 16 to 19 Bursary fund is a government funded scheme intended to help support those young people who face the greatest financial barriers to continuing in education or training after age 16. Individual schools and colleges are free to establish their own assessment and award criteria within broad guidelines set out by the government.

We provide 16 to 19 bursaries for students to ensure they can access their studies, where they would otherwise be unable to do so for financial reasons.

The bursary is intended to help students with the essential costs of attending school and their studies, e.g. important books, equipment and travel costs. We are committed to closing the attainment gap between students from disadvantaged and more advantaged backgrounds, ensuring that every student participates in, and benefits from, a place in 16 to 19 education and training. Schools and colleges receive a fixed sum of money each year to allocate to students which can mean that the amount of financial support an individual student receives may vary from year to year depending on the number of qualifying applications that are received

There are two types of bursaries available: discretionary bursaries and bursaries for defined vulnerable groups. Each bursary is allocated based on students meeting the eligibility criteria. In both cases, the setting is responsible for determining whether a student's application has been successful.

We are dedicated to:

- Distributing 16 to 19 bursaries via a fair and equal process that is transparent, accountable and easily understood.
- Ensuring that information regarding the application, award and administration of 16 to 19 bursaries is available to all.
- Widening access to, and participation in, 16 to 19 education.
- Ensuring all students who are eligible for funding have access to it.

Eligibility

Students aged 16 or over and under 19 years old on 31 August 2026 will qualify for bursaries for the 2026-27 academic year. Students aged under 16 will only receive bursaries in exceptional circumstances, e.g. if they are following an accelerated study programme.

Students must also satisfy the residency criteria as specified in the ESFA Funding Guidance. Students who live in Wales can apply for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) see Welsh EMA.

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for a bursary for defined vulnerable groups, although the school may decide the student is eligible for a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 or have an EHC plan, remain eligible and need the support to continue their participation.
Students on distance learning provision are unlikely to need help from the bursary, but in instances where they require financial help, support in-kind will be provided, e.g. a temporary travel pass to attend exams.

Young offenders may apply for a bursary provided that either they are serving a non-custodial sentence, they have been released early from a custodial sentence (except on temporary license), or they have been remanded to a non-secure institution.

If a student's circumstances change during the year, they can submit a further application and their circumstances will be reassessed.

All students will be assessed individually for either bursary. Evidence must be provided to support applications – a full list of supporting evidence is outlined in our 16 to 19 Bursary Application Form and in the 'Supporting Evidence' section below.

Assessment of Needs

The level of actual financial need will be assessed for all students (in addition to eligibility), and a set amount of funding will not be automatically awarded. Funding will reflect actual participation costs and all costs must be evidenced.

Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups

Students in the following defined vulnerable groups may be eligible for support through the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund:

- Students who are looked after by a local authority (in care).
- Care leavers.
- Students receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit in their own right because they are financially supporting themselves (or themselves and a dependent).
- Students receiving both DLA/PIP and ESA or Universal Credit in their own right.

The amount awarded will be based on an assessment of individual need and the actual costs of participating in education. Awards may be up to £1,200 where justified by need but may be lower where a student's costs are less. Alternatively, we may decide to allocate more than £1,200 if a student needs extra help to remain in education; the extra payment will be paid from the setting's discretionary bursary allocation or its own funds. There will be no blanket or flat-rate payments without consideration of the student's specific financial needs.

We are responsible for determining whether a student is eligible for a bursary for defined vulnerable groups. If a student meets the above criteria, but we believe a bursary is not required as they do not have any financial need and do not need further support, we may decide not to distribute a bursary to this student.

This may include, for example, where:

- A student undertakes a distance learning programme and there are no financial barriers to participation, e.g. no travel or food costs.
- A student is in LA care and education costs are covered in full by the LA.
- A student is financially supported by their partner.

Where such a bursary is refused, the school will explain to the student and/or the student's parents, carer or support worker the aim of bursary funding and why it is appropriate not to award any in this instance. In all cases, the setting will consider the particular circumstances of each case, and may choose to award a reduced amount, e.g. where the financial help needed is limited. The school will make clear in its application form that there is a possibility of no award or a limited award.

Discretionary bursaries

The school allocates discretionary bursaries based on those who are most in need of financial support. Discretionary bursaries will be reviewed each year the student requires support. We will base all decisions about which students receive help from the 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 school will carry out a financial assessment for each student to establish their household income, whether there is an actual financial need and what kinds of costs the student has. The criteria we will consider include the following:

- Students living in a household with a total annual net income (including any taxable earnings and applicable benefits) of less than £35,000.
- Students who are from a single-parent family or have one or more dependent siblings in their family
- Students who have additional responsibilities, such as being a young carer or parent
- Students who travel greater than 3 miles to the institution
- The level of educational costs the student needs help with e.g. the cost of equipment/clothing required by their course(s)

For the purposes of this assessment, household income will normally include the income of parent(s), carer(s), partner(s) or other adults financially responsible for the student. Evidence of household income must be provided as part of the application process.

Meeting the household income threshold does not automatically guarantee an award. All awards will be based on an individual assessment of financial need, actual participation costs, and the funding available to the school. Evidence of participation costs may be requested before an award is approved.

Applications from households with a net income exceeding £35,000 are not normally considered. However, if any student is facing financial hardship due to exceptional circumstances that will impact their ability to participate in education, they should submit an application together with a supporting statement, evidence of household income, and any evidence of the serious financial difficulties being experienced. Evidence supporting eligibility, assessment of need, participation costs and awards will be retained in accordance with DfE audit requirements and data protection legislation.

Allocation of bursary funds

Funding for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups will be allocated first. The allocation of funds to discretionary bursaries will be decided once all applications have been processed to ensure fairness and equality. This is because the funding provided by the government is limited and is also allocated to the school in advance, so it is not based on the number of applicants.

In determining how bursary funding is allocated, the school will have regard to the Local Authority's published Post-16 Transport Policy Statement. Bursary funding is intended to complement, and not duplicate, support available through other transport assistance schemes. Travel costs will be considered as part of an individual assessment of need.

Applying for a bursary

You can apply any time after GCSE results day which is Thursday 20th August 2026. Students must complete the application form and provide the necessary supporting documentation.

FORM LINK: 16 to 19 Bursary Application Form
EMAIL FOR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: finance@tltrust.co.uk

All applications and supporting evidence should be submitted by Monday 21st September 2026. This will enable us to assess the overall demand and distribute discretionary awards correctly and fairly. However, we do understand that needs may arise throughout the academic year, and we will still consider applications after this date where appropriate.

Our application process will maintain the student's confidentiality.

If an application is successful, we will send an award letter to the student confirming the amount of support, what support will be made in-kind, and the payment conditions.

Supporting Evidence

All applicants

- Birth Certificate or Passport to confirm their date of birth
- Document to confirm the student's current address such as their bank statement or a child benefit letter

Vulnerable bursary applicants

Depending on their circumstances, students applying for a bursary for defined vulnerable groups will need to provide the following:

- **For students in Local Authority care or who have recently left Local Authority care:** written confirmation, such as a letter or an email, of current or previous LAC status from the relevant LA (the LA that looks after them or provides their leaving care services)
- **For students in receipt of Income Support:** a copy of the Income Support award notice, which must evidence that the student is entitled to the benefit in their own right, and confirm that the student can be in FE or training
- **For students in receipt of Universal Credit:** copies of the Universal Credit Award notice from the last **three months**, which must evidence that the student is entitled to the benefit in their own right, as well as additional documentation to confirm their independent status, e.g. a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificate, or utility bills
- **For students in receipt of Universal Credit or ESA and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments:** a copy of the Universal Credit or ESA award from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as well as evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.

The school will only submit funding claims for students in defined vulnerable groups after eligibility and financial need have been assessed and evidenced.

Discretionary bursary applicants

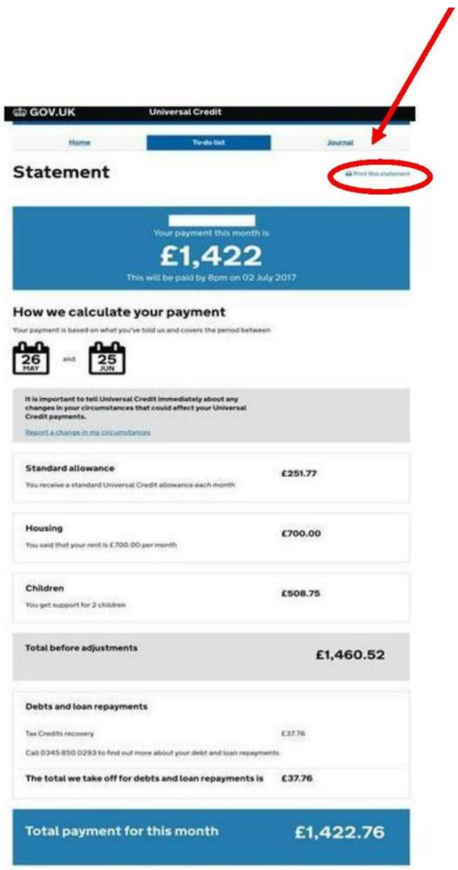
Students applying for a discretionary bursary will need to provide the type of evidence needed to verify their household income and transport/educational costs. Evidence of Free School Meals is not required as the Local Authority provides the school with confirmation of all students granted Free School Meals.

Qualifying Benefit	Acceptable Evidence
Universal Credit (annual take home pay + UC payment totalling no more than £35,000)	Your households last 3 full universal credit statements (these can be accessed from your universal credit account; see below)
Income Support	Letter from the benefits agency dated within the last 3 months or a current bank statement showing income support payments. Bank statements must show the account holder's name and be currently dated.

Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit (annual net income + tax credits not totalling more than £35,000)	HMRC - Tax Credit Award Letter dated within the last 12 months. Please provide ALL PAGES of this letter.
Job Seeker's Allowance (income related)	Letter from the benefits agency dated within the last 3 months. If the letter is more than 3 months old, please also provide a current bank statement showing the JSA payment/s. The bank statement must show the account holder's name and be currently dated.
Employment and Support Allowance (income related)	Letter from the benefits agency dated within the last 3 months. If the letter is more than 3 months old, please also provide a current bank statement showing the ESA payment/s. The bank statement must show the account holder's name and be currently dated.
Pension Credit	Letter from the benefits agency dated within the last three months or a current bank statement showing the pension credit payment/s. The bank statement must show the account holder's name and be currently dated.

We can accept paper or electronic copies of the supporting documents. If submitting a scan or photograph, it must be a complete and unaltered image of the underlying paper document.

Accessing a Universal Credit Statement



To download your UC statements, log-in to your Universal Credit account and go to the statement summary page. If you click into the statement, it will come up on the screen. You can then "Print to PDF"/"Save as PDF".
You will have to save the document to your device (laptop, Computer or phone).

The saved document can then be sent as an attachment in an email to finance@tltrust.co.uk

This also works for your bank statements.

Please note that if you decide to screenshot the images from your phone, rather than download the statements, YOU MUST copy all sections not just the Payment amount for the month. This will be more time consuming and if unclear then it will not be accepted, so ideally please download the full statements as above.

Electronic documents should be emailed to finance@tltrust.co.uk
Paper copies should be placed in a sealed, clearly marked envelope 'For the attention of finance' and either hand-delivered to school reception or posted to: The Learning Trust Finance Office, Queen's Park High School, Queen's Park Road, Chester, CH4 7AE

Please note that deliberate understatements of income may result in payments being stopped, reclaimed and if necessary, reported to the Police as an incidence of fraud.

Conditions for receiving the bursary

All students must meet the agreed standards set by us to be eligible for the funds – these are explained to all students during the application process.

The majority of the support the bursary can provide for students will be given at the start of their courses, as it is essential for students to have the correct resources to access their studies. However, throughout the year students will be able to apply for additional funding, as and when it is needed. This may be for school trips, additional resources or other unforeseen costs.

In order to qualify for these additional payments, students must continue to meet the agreed standards for attendance and behaviour set by the school.

Authorised absences will not affect eligibility for the bursary; however, repeated unauthorised absence may affect future bursary payments following an individual review of the student's circumstances. Payments will be stopped where:

- A student is absent for a period of four consecutive weeks or more, excluding holidays or if there is evidence the student intends to return.
- A student withdraws themselves from a study programme.
- Money is not being spent for the reasons it was awarded.
- A student breaches any of the conditions for payment.

Any decision to withhold payments will be proportionate, based on individual circumstances and whether the student continues to face financial barriers to participation.

Receipt of the bursary will not affect the receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, e.g. Income Support.

Paying the bursary

The majority of the support the bursary can provide for students will be given at the start of their courses, as it is essential for students to have the correct resources to access their studies. Wherever possible, funds will be allocated in-kind rather than in cash, i.e. the school will purchase travel passes, or required books or equipment on the student's behalf.

In instances where payments in-kind are not possible, students will be asked to provide receipts and we will pay funding by BACS transfer to the student's own bank account. In exceptional circumstances where the student is unable to manage their own funds, we will consider who will manage the bursary on the student's behalf.
Students will receive help based on their areas of need.

The following priority areas will be addressed first:

- Travel to school, e.g. bus passes and travel cards
- Equipment costs, e.g. books, stationery, laptops or clothing
- Any other educational support, e.g. attendance at university open days and interviews
- Costs related to work placements
- The costs of visits, field trips which form an <u>essential</u> part of your course.

If required, a member of sixth form staff and/or the finance team will meet with individual students to help them with budgeting and ensure the fund addresses the area's most in need.

We reserve the right to request that, if a student has had books, laptops, or equipment loaned or bought for them through the fund, they return it at the end of their study programme. We may also request that the equipment is kept on the school site.

Please note that Year 13 bursary payments are only payable until the date of the student's final external examination.

Maintaining confidentiality

Any information provided to the school will only be used for the purpose of processing your application for a 16 to 19 bursary. Information about your application, eligibility, or award (whether successful or not) will not be shared with other students, members of staff, or third parties unless it is necessary for the administration of the bursary, or we are required or permitted to do so by law. Where appropriate, we will seek your consent before sharing information. We understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and recognise that applications for bursary support may contain sensitive personal information.

The school has a duty to protect the public funds it administers. Information provided as part of a bursary application may be used to prevent and detect fraud. For this purpose, information may be shared with third-party organisations that process or audit public funds. Information may be shared where permitted or required by law and in accordance with our Privacy Notice, the UK GDPR, and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data will be retained in accordance with the school's records retention schedule and applicable data protection legislation.

Appeals process

If students disagree with the outcome of their application, or where payment has been withheld due to not meeting the outlined conditions, they should follow our complaints procedure, detailed in our Complaints Procedures Policy – this is available on our website.

Further information

Further details and guidance is available on the government website: Gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

If you have any queries regarding the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, please contact the Head of Sixth Form or the Sixth Form Support Manager, or email the finance team via finance@tltrust.co.uk