



16-19 BURSARY POLICY

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1. POLICY PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for the administration of the 16-19 Bursary Scheme, ensuring that financial support is provided to eligible students to overcome barriers to participation in post-16 education, in line with the Trust's commitment to educational equity and financial integrity. The Girls' Learning Trust, and all schools within it, operate two types of bursary:

- A vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups.
- Discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy is based on the statutory guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which sets out the eligibility criteria and operational requirements for the distribution of bursary funds to students.

It complies with the Education Act 1996, which mandates the provision of financial assistance to students in need and ensures that funds are distributed equitably in accordance with government guidelines.

The policy also considers the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that the allocation of funds promotes equal access to education and does not discriminate against any student based on protected characteristics.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Trust Board: The Trust Board holds the ultimate responsibility for approving the 16-19 Bursary Policy and ensuring its consistent implementation across all schools within the Trust. The Board reviews the policy annually to ensure it aligns with both legal requirements and the Trust's financial strategy. Additionally, the Trust Board monitors the overall effectiveness of the policy, making necessary adjustments based on feedback and compliance reviews to maintain its relevance and effectiveness.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO): The CEO is accountable for the implementation of the 16-19 Bursary Policy. This includes ensuring that the policy aligns with the Trust's educational objectives and is communicated effectively to all relevant stakeholders. The CEO coordinates with Headteachers and the CFO to ensure the policy is applied uniformly across the Trust, supporting consistent and equitable access to bursary support for all eligible students.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO): The Chief Financial Officer, in collaboration with the Finance Team, is responsible for overseeing the financial management of the bursary scheme, ensuring compliance with Trust regulations and legal requirements, and providing strategic guidance on fund allocation.

Headteachers: Headteachers are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the 16-19 Bursary Policy within their respective schools. They ensure that staff, students, and parents are well-informed about the policy and its implications. Headteachers have the authority to make decisions on individual cases. They also monitor the effectiveness of the policy at the school level and provide feedback to the CEO and CFO to facilitate ongoing improvements.

4. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

All students are eligible to apply for the scheme if they:

- Are aged over 16 but under 19 years of age on the 31 August in the academic year in which they start their programme of study. However, students over 19 years old may still be eligible if they are continuing on a course started aged 16 to 18 (known as being a '19+ continuer'), or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Meet the Educational Funding Agency (EFA) residency criteria for post 16 education.
- Are participating in an educational course provided by the Girls' Learning Trust.
- Have financial needs to enable participation in education which cannot be met by household or other third-party income.
- Satisfy other conditions set by the relevant school related to attendance, work commitments, and a Sixth Form Charter (or other agreement) where relevant. These will be communicated to students by the school as part of the award process.

Please note students must meet all the criteria to be eligible.

5. DEMONSTRATING FINANCIAL NEED

There are two ways that students (and their families) can demonstrate a need for financial assistance through the scheme. One is for the vulnerable students, and the other is for all other students.

In all cases, students will only receive the funding based on their application and specific needs.

Bursaries Specifically for Vulnerable Students

Up to £1,200 of financial support per year is available if a student is in one of the following defined vulnerable groups:

- Currently in care or leaving care.
- In receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own right because they are financially supporting themselves and/or a dependent e.g., child or partner.
- In receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in their own right.

Bursaries for All Other Students in Need

For all other bursaries the level of funding per year is dependent on the funds available and the number of students eligible. It will therefore vary from year to year.

Due to the limited funds available, priority will be given to those whose combined household income is below £30,000 and have the greatest need.

6. USE OF FUNDING

The purpose of the scheme is to address financial difficulties in accessing education in the Sixth Form. Applicants must specify on their Application Forms what they want to use the funding for.

The ESFA has provided general guidance for the type of expenditure that may fall within the remit of the scheme:

- Public transport costs for getting to and from school.
- Essential books and equipment relevant to the courses being studied and not already provided.

- Educational trips necessary for the curriculum being studied.
- Clothing to meet the Sixth Form dress code and/or specialist clothing.
- Meals during school hours (provided on site by the canteen).
- Travel to university open days, or similar events.
- Fees for university entrance tests, such as Bio Medical Admissions Test (BMAT), UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) and similar entrance tests.

Other expenditure will be considered if it is directly related to supporting the student in overcoming specific barriers to participation so they can remain in post-16 education.

7. APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications will usually open at the start of each academic year, close in the last week of September, with the Bursary Panel meeting the following week. All schools will publish clear deadlines for applications and decisions on their websites.

The Trust will provide supporting documentation and a central application process that enables all students and parents to complete the process in the strictest confidence. This will be done via a digital application portal that includes sections on:

- Learner Information (automatically populated where possible)
- Financial Support Requested
- Level of Funding Sought
- Parent / Carer Information

All schools will promote the scheme to incoming year 12 and year 13 students. Training sessions or individual support will be provided to students / parents / carers where needed.

For late applications and exceptional circumstances, students, parents or carers may apply in writing directly to the Headteacher for a discretionary bursary, outlining the specific circumstances with supporting documentation. Any decision will be taken by the Bursary Panel, at the sole discretion of the school and will be dependent on funds being available.

Supporting Information

Supporting information must be provided as part of the application to establish financial need. Individuals will be required to sign to confirm this documentation is accurate, and informed that any false submissions may be referred to the Department for Education, or the Police.

Clear guidance will be provided for students, parents and carers as to what counts as sufficient documentation to support an application.

8. BURSARY DECISION

Each school shall establish a Bursary Panel to:

- Review Applications
- Determine Eligibility of Applications
- Award Funding
- Monitor the Uptake and Impact of the Scheme

The Bursary Panel is established by the Headteacher in each school, and should normally comprise of at least three members, one of whom should be a senior member of the teaching staff within the school to act as Chair. Support for the committee shall be provided by the Trust's central finance team.

The Bursary Panel should meet at least three times per academic year to allocate and monitor the impact of the scheme.

Appeals relating to any decision made by the Bursary Panel should be made to the relevant Headteacher. Further appeals should be made using the Trust Complaints Policy.

9. ACCESSING FUNDING

Detailed guidance setting out the operational specifics of how funding is accessed will be published each year by the Trust's Finance team and communicated directly to all those involved in administering the scheme.

Most funding will be provided directly to the student 'in kind', which means the school will purchase or pay for items up front where possible. This shall be done through the normal purchasing routes in operation with the Trust.

Funding for food and subsistence shall be made available through the established contract catering provider at the school. This shall normally be through the contactless payment system.

Some funding will be provided on the basis of a claim, where students are required to purchase an item and claim against this.

A portion (not exceeding £150 except for exceptional circumstances) of any bursary award may be made up front in cash to enable a student to incur expenses up front where the school is unable to pre-purchase items on their behalf. Retrospective receipts will be requested as proof where appropriate.

Specific arrangements shall be made for those students transitioning from year 12 to year 13, reflecting the fact that course teaching often starts before the start of the next academic year.