

THE CEDAR FEDERATION

IFIELD SCHOOL

16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

Reviewed: Autumn 2026

Review: Autumn 2027

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2026-2027

1. Background

A key priority for the Government is to close the gap in attainment between those from less fortunate and more affluent backgrounds, and to ensure every young person participates in and benefits from 16 to 19 education or training.

The Department for Education (DfE) established the 16-19 Bursary Fund in 2011. The aim of the fund is to support students aged 16 to 19 to continue in education, when they may experience financial difficulties. It enables those students to access additional funds to support learning and participation in activities to enrich their educational experiences and pursue applications to Higher Education.

There are two types of 16-19 bursaries available:

1. Vulnerable Bursary: This is available to the most vulnerable groups.
2. Discretionary Bursary: This is available to qualifying students who do not meet the criteria of the vulnerable bursary. The amount awarded will be variable and is given to meet individual needs e.g. support with the cost of transport, meals and resources.

This policy is based on guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) [16 to 19 Bursary Fund: provider guide - GOV.UK](#)

2. Definitions

- 'In care' is defined as: children looked after by a Local Authority on a voluntary basis (Section 20 [Children Act 1989](#)) or under a care order (Section 31 [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 [Children Act 1989](#))
- 'Care leaver' is defined as:
 - A young person aged 16 or 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 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), or
 - A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to 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.

3. Eligibility Criteria

For students to be eligible for the bursary fund, students must meet the age and residency criteria as listed below:

- Be aged over 16 and under 19 on 31st August 2026 for the 2026-2027 academic year or 19+ with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or continuing a course started aged 16 to 18 (known as being a '19+ continuer')
- Be enrolled on a full-time course
- Meet the DfE's residency criteria as set out in the DfE funding regulations for post 16 provision (i.e. legally resident in the UK)
- Link to detailed guidance: [Advice: funding rules for 16 to 19 provision 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for a Vulnerable Bursary.

4. Additional Eligibility – Vulnerable Bursary

In addition to the general eligibility above, a student must meet the criteria for one or more of the following categories to qualify for a vulnerable bursary:

- Be in care, or a care leaver (see 'Definitions' Section 2)
- Be in receipt of income support (IS) or universal credit (UC) in place of income support (in their own right).
- Be in receipt of employment and support allowance or universal credit and are financially supporting themselves.
- Be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC (in their own right).

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 financial need, for example, because their financial needs are met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs. Where a bursary is provided, the funds will generally equate to up to £1,200 per year for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, cases will be considered individually, and the outcome will be based on a student's needs. Students will only receive the amount they need to participate and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not require the full amount.

If a student's study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, they will be paid a pro-rata amount. Ifield School will also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding whether a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

Ifield School 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.

5. Additional Eligibility – Discretionary Bursary

In addition to the general eligibility outlined in Section 3 above, a student must satisfy one or more of the following criteria to be considered for a Level 2 discretionary bursary:

- The student is eligible for, or previously eligible for, Free School Meals (FSM)
- The student's gross annual household income is below £20,000
- The student or family is in receipt of a means tested benefit, including Universal Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Pension Credit, or other equivalent benefits.

Students who do not satisfy these criteria, but who are able to demonstrate significant financial hardship arising for a specific reason not covered above may be awarded a Level 3 bursary on a case-by-case basis. Assessment will be based on the following:

- Level of household income
- Travel distance, home location and availability, cost and practicality of public transport
- The requirements of their study programme
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they require additional support.

There is no set limit and the amount of discretionary bursary awarded will be based on individual need and will depend on funds available. A discretionary bursary is not guaranteed to be awarded even if all eligibility criteria are met.

Each student's eligibility will be reviewed each academic year.

In exceptional circumstances, on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the Headteacher, Ifield may provide one-off support in-kind or reimbursements to students who may not fall precisely within the two defined bursary groups.

6. Evidence

All applications to access the 16-19 bursary must be supported by appropriate evidence. Examples of acceptable evidence are:

- Written confirmation from the Local Authority of current or previously looked-after status
- A copy of the Universal Credit or Income Support award notice from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and/or evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments, 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.

7. Application

Applications must be submitted using the correct form (Appendix 1). Applications should be submitted within six weeks of the start of the academic year.

Whilst year-round applications will be accepted, funds may have been fully allocated before late applications are received and as such late applications may not receive an award. A proportion of the allocation may be withheld for students who join or transfer in-year, who legitimately could not apply at the start of the academic year. Applications will be reviewed and a decision will be notified within two weeks of receipt.

8. Payments

Payments will be made by bank transfer into a bank account held in the name of the student or will be made in-kind by the direct provision or supply of goods or services. Cash payments will not be made.

The amount and frequency of payment will be determined by the award given and will vary according to the agreed need. Where a general award is made, regular payments will be paid into bank accounts on a weekly, monthly or termly basis provided the conditions of payment are met.

Where specific needs are identified, payments will be reimbursed on an ad-hoc basis when supported by evidence such as receipts, if the school is not able to purchase the required goods or services directly.

Where a student leaves a programme of study prior to completion, payments will be pro-rata to the date of leaving.

Examples of appropriate discretionary bursary use are as follows:

- Books/equipment required for the programme of study
- Transport (to enable attendance)
- Meals
- Educational visits
- University open days and interview costs

This list is not exhaustive however any expenditure must be connected to the student's education.

Expenditure must be pre-approved by the school or may not be reimbursed.

The bursary fund cannot be used for any of the following:

- Gifts cards/vouchers
- Attendance rewards
- Goods and services benefitting the whole student body including those not qualifying for a bursary award
- Blanket cash payments not linked to individual need

9. Conditions

Students must meet the following criteria in order to receive their bursaries:

- Maintain a target attendance of 95%. Students with below 95% attendance are at risk of their bursary payments being withheld. Students with below 90% attendance will receive no bursary payments.

Some allowance may be made for students for whom this is not possible, for example those with a chronic or ongoing illness or other exceptional circumstances already known to Ifield School.

10. Change in Circumstances

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

11. Confidentiality

Ifield School will ensure that applications are handled confidentially. For audit purposes, however, computerised copies of all documentation for learner support will be kept for a period of six years and will be held securely and in compliance with the Data Protection Act. The information will be made available for audit purposes.

12. Unspent Funds

Bursary funding cannot be carried forward by the school for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the DfE by the school 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. Equal Opportunities

No applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, considering the views of Ifield's students, their parents/carers and statutory guidance from the DfE.



Application Form

Student Name	
Contact Name and Email Address	

Please Tick the Level of Bursary applying for:

☐	Level 1 – Vulnerable Groups Bursary
☐	Level 2 – Discretionary Bursary (Eligible)
☐	Level 3 – Discretionary Bursary (Other)

Evidence Required

At least one piece of evidence must be submitted to support the application.

Level 1 - Vulnerable Groups Bursary

- Evidence from the Local Authority regarding care status
- Evidence of care leaver status
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) award for the student only

Level 2 - Discretionary Bursary

Household income below £20,000 / Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility

- Currently receiving FSM
- Tax Credit Award Notice showing a gross household income of less than £20,000
- Pension Credit Award Notice
- Income Support Award Notice
- Universal Credit Award Notice
- Payslips/P60 showing household gross income of less than £20,000

Requirements

Transport

Please provide details:

Amount Requested £ _____

Books and Resources

Please provide details:

Amount Requested £ _____

Educational Visits

Please provide details:

Amount requested £ _____

Other

Please provide details and costings (actual or estimated):

Amount requested £ _____