



THE COOMBE SECONDARY SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

16 – 19 Bursary Fund Policy

2018 - 19

1. Introduction

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is a scheme set up by the government to help the most vulnerable young people aged 16-19 continue in full time education. Its purpose is to provide financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation, so that they can remain in education.

2. Categories of Bursary

There are two types of 16-19 bursary

- **Vulnerable Student Bursary** This is a bursary of up to £1200 per year for young people who meet the general eligibility criteria and who have been identified as being in one of the defined vulnerable groups as set out below.
- **Discretionary bursary** – this is available to all young people who meet the general and additional discretionary eligibility criteria as set out below. It is awarded at the Trust’s discretion based on individual needs to cover specific costs such as transport, books or equipment, and other course costs.

3. Eligibility

General Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a bursary, all young people must satisfy the following criteria

- **Age** - students must be over 16 and under 19 at 31 August 2017. If a student turns 19 during their programme of study, they can continue to receive the bursary to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.
- **Residency** – students must meet the residency criteria in the EFA funding regulations for post 16 provision 2017-18. This document sets out the evidence required to confirm eligibility and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision>
- **Provision**- students must be participating in provision that is subject to a quality assurance inspection by a public body (e.g. OFSTED) and funded by the ESFA, European Social Fund, or otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3)accredited by Ofqual.

The young person must then also meet the additional eligibility criteria outlined below for the category of bursary they are applying.

Additional eligibility for Vulnerable Student Bursary

Students must fall into one of the categories below to be eligible for a vulnerable student bursary

- Young people in care, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Care leavers
- Young people personally in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit
- Disabled young people in receipt of both the Employment and Support Allowance (or Universal Credit if this has replaced E & SA) and Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal independence Payments)

The allocation of these funds is subject to audit so the Trust will require evidence that the application is genuine. The Trust will retain copies of evidence for a period of 6 years. All information will be treated in confidence.

Appropriate evidence includes

- Recent entitlement or award statement setting out the benefit to which the young person is entitled, confirming that the terms of the benefit allow them to participate in further education.
- Written confirmation of the young person's current or previous looked after status from the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services.

Additional eligibility for Discretionary Student Bursary

Where a student does not meet the vulnerable student criteria, he or she may still be eligible for some support from the Discretionary Fund. The Trust has set three tiers of support based on household income, but will also consider those facing financial hardship due to exceptional reasons or circumstances.

1. **Tier A** - Students eligible to receive free school meals¹ (FSM) will be eligible to claim a bursary. For those students who have submitted a successful FSM application, please attach a copy of your confirmation letter. No further evidence is necessary; however, the Trust will need to be satisfied that the application is genuine following the standard procedures that are currently in operation for FSM application. *(Students claiming in this category will not normally be eligible to claim bursary funding for lunches, as they will be entitled to receive a free school meal at school)*

Those students, who are eligible to receive free school meals but have not taken up their entitlement, will need to include original documentation supporting their claim – examples of acceptable supporting evidence are:

- **A full Tax Credit Award Notice (TCAN)**. This document from HMRC details entitlement to tax credits and shows the total income for the year.
- **Other Income Support or Universal Credit** award letters that show evidence of income. See footnote for full list of eligible benefits.

All documents must relate to the current tax year.

2. **Tier B** – students whose household income is less than £27,000 may apply for support.
3. **Tier C** – students whose household income is between £27,000 and £30,000.

The following evidence will be considered as acceptable evidence for students applying for a discretionary bursary under Tiers B and C.

- A copy of entitlement to means – tested state benefit or Tax Credit Award Notice confirming household income.
- P60 End of year certificate
- Payslips from previous 3 months
- Bank statements for the previous 3 months
- Self – Assessment tax calculation (SA302) if self employed
- Evidence of other benefits, pension awards

¹ Your child may be able to get free school meals if you are in receipt of any of the following; Income Support, income-based Jobseekers Allowance, income-related Employment & Support Allowance, support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190), Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit, Universal Credit

Please note evidence must be submitted for all adults who contribute to household costs.

Exceptional circumstances/ additional costs - Any young person meeting general eligibility requirements and facing financial hardship due to an exceptional reason or circumstance, or who needs funds to cover an additional cost connected to their studies, can apply for funds by completing an application form requesting additional support available from the sixth form team at both sites.

Consideration will be given to number of dependent children in the household, single parent families, whether the young person is a carer or parent.

Students will be required to inform the school of any changes in their financial circumstances, which may affect their eligibility for bursary funding.

4. Allocation of Funds

Vulnerable Student Bursary

The funding for the vulnerable student bursaries is held centrally by the Student Bursary Support Service. Whenever a new student meeting the criteria is identified, the Trust must draw the funding down by completing and submitting a claim form via the SBSS online portal.

<https://studentbursarysupport.education.gov.uk>

Guidance notes are built into the form, however if further help is required this can be obtained by contacting the SBSS team on 0300 303 8610 or enquiries@efalearnersupport.co.uk

Discretionary Bursary

- 5% of the fund will be held back for administration.
- Students applying under Tier A will be assessed individually and awarded a bursary based on their actual financial need.
- If there is still money in the fund after the allocation of funds to Tier A, students applying under Tier B will be assessed individually and awarded a bursary based on actual financial need.
- If there is still money in the fund after the allocation of funds to Tiers A and B, students applying under Tier C will be assessed on their financial need and may be awarded a contribution towards costs and university day trips and educational visits.
- If a student encounters unexpected costs connected to their studies, for example a fieldtrip, then an additional claim can be made under the exceptional circumstances category. Any award of bursary funding outside the thresholds set will depend on there being sufficient funds available and the relative needs of all eligible students.

5. Conditions for receipt of student bursaries

Students will be reviewed termly (re: their attendance, timekeeping and general conduct) at pre-set dates throughout the year in accordance with the sixth form code of conduct policy. In order for the ensuing payments to be authorised, students must be compliant with the code of conduct and not be subject to a behaviour contract.

Upon review each term, students will also be expected to have attendance higher than 95% for the term and should have no unauthorised absence. Students in receipt of this grant funding will not usually be eligible or granted any further financial support from the school in help towards these costs.

6. Applications

Application forms can be collected at enrolment. Alternatively, forms will also be available from either Mrs D. Williams, 6th form administrator at Coombe Girls' school or the main office at Coombe Boys' School.

The deadline for receipt of applications is Wednesday 26th September 2018.

Applications made after this date will be considered provided sufficient funds are available. Once the bursary fund has been used, it will not be possible to consider further applications. Funding is not guaranteed by receipt of an application form. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis if eligibility criteria have been met and will be subject to the availability of funds. Completed application forms with suitable evidence of eligibility should be returned to:

Mrs D. Williams in the main school office for students at the Clarence Avenue Campus.

Main reception for students at the College Gardens Campus

Late applications

Late applications will be considered at any point during the year for students whose financial circumstances change, or for new students joining the sixth form.

Awards for regular costs such as travel or meals will only be payable from the time the student became eligible to the end of the course duration.

Payments will commence from the next scheduled instalment unless this would create undue hardship for the student. The Head of Sixth Form must approve any such payment.

Payments

Where possible, payments in kind will be used by the school. This will always be the case for curriculum trips/activities paid for by the school and usually for course materials.

Any remaining bursary due after deducting all payments in kind, will be paid in three instalments during the course of the academic year no later than

Friday 26th October 2018

Friday 25th January 2019

Friday 12th April 2019

Payments will be subject to the student meeting the required attendance, punctuality and behaviour targets as outlined above and in the Sixth Form Code of Conduct.

All payments will be made by BACS transfer into the student's own bank account.

7. Decisions and appeals

i. Decision process

The Bursary Application Panel will assess all applications for a bursary. This consists of two members of the senior leadership team and a member of the sixth form student support team.

The panel will review the application, supporting evidence and any other personal circumstantial evidence submitted. Applicants will be notified by mid- October of the outcome for initial applications and within two weeks of receipt for any subsequent applications.

ii. Appeal against the decision not to award a bursary fund grant.

Students have the right to appeal a decision. Students or their parent/carers will be required to put any appeal in writing within 21 days of receiving confirmation of their application outcome.

The letter must clearly set out the reason for the appeal, which must prove that the student has been wrongly assessed as falling outside of the eligibility criteria, plus any further evidence to support the appeal.

Letters should be sent to the Head of Sixth Form at the site the student is studying at.

The appeal will be considered by a panel of governors. The decision of the panel is final and will be given in writing within 14 days of the decision.

iii. Appeal against the withdrawal of a payment during the course of the academic year.

The Head of Sixth Form will make the decision as to whether the student meets the attendance and behaviour criteria set out in section 5. If a decision is made to withhold payment, the student will be notified in writing before the next usual payment date.

Appeals against decisions made regarding attendance or behaviour should be made to the Headteacher of the site the student is studying at, in writing, and within 5 working days of the decision letter being received.

A decision regarding the appeal must be reached and communicated within 5 days of the appeal letter being received. The Headteacher's decision is final.

8. Data and Confidentiality

The Trust will treat all information supplied under this policy as confidential and in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy and records management policy. For audit purposes, all information must be retained for a period of 6 years.

9. Audit

The 16-19 Bursary fund is subject to audit so the Trust must retain all documentation relating to each claim, whether it was awarded or not and a brief justification. In particular, documentation should include:

- Application forms
- Evidence showing the student is eligible
- Evidence of payments received from SBSS (Vulnerable claims)
- Evidence of payments made to the students.
- Receipts for purchases made e.g. bus pass, book receipts.

All documentation must be kept for a period of 6 years. By submitting the application form, students and their families consent to the information connected to their busary application to be stored securely by the Trust for this amount of time.

10. Misuse and Fraud

The Trust has a duty to investigate instances of suspected fraud when a student is applying for bursary funds.

When evidence is found that misleading or fraudulent information has been knowingly submitted by a student or parent, resulting in the student receiving a bursary that they should not have received, the Trust will attempt to recover overpayment from the student.

If significant fraud² is identified the Trust has a duty to report to the Education Funding Agency

The matter may also be referred to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their parent or carer facing prosecution.

Updated: September 2018

² The amount exceeds £1200, or the particulars are novel, unusual, systematic or complex, or there is likely to be great public interest because of the nature of the fraud or the people involved.