

Seaford Head School

Achieving Excellence Together



16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

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Statement of intent

At Seaford Head School, we are committed to closing the attainment gap between students from disadvantaged and more advantaged backgrounds, and ensuring that every young person participates in, and benefits from, a place in 16-19 education and training. The bursary is intended, therefore, to help eligible students with the essential costs of their studies, e.g. essential books, equipment and travel costs.

We are dedicated to:

- Distributing 16-19 bursaries via a fair and equal process that is transparent, accountable and easily understood.
- Ensuring that information regarding the application, award and administration of 16-19 bursaries is publicly available via the school website and Assistant Head of year for years 12 & 13.
- Widening access to, and participation in, 16-19 education and training.
- Monitoring and reviewing our policies to ensure effectiveness.
- Setting high targets and objectives to develop a culture of continuous improvement.
- Ensuring adequate resources are available to implement policies, as much as is reasonably practicable.
- Sharing and acquiring best practice through partnerships with neighbouring schools.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE '16 to 19 bursary fund guide **2026 to 2027** academic year'
- Equality Act 2010

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Attendance and Absence Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy

2. The school's responsibilities

The school will be responsible for setting eligibility criteria for students at the school and will set conditions for receiving the bursary, such as regular attendance. Arrangements for applying for bursaries will be straightforward and confidential.

The needs of each student who applies for the bursary will be assessed by the school and evidence will be obtained to support each application. The school will claim vulnerable bursaries from the DfE for each eligible student.

Records will be kept by the school of all assessments and payments. The application process will maintain confidentiality.

The school will make this policy available early enough for students to be able to use the information when deciding which post-16 school to attend.

The school will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when setting its criteria and will not discriminate against students because of their protected characteristics.

3. Raising awareness and take-up of the 16-19 bursary fund

To raise awareness of the bursary, the school will employ different marketing activities, including the following as appropriate:

- Posting information about the bursary on the school website and in the prospectus.
- Distributing information at open evenings for Year 11 pupils
- Providing students who attend a pre-enrolment interview with a brochure which includes information about the bursary and directs them to the school's website
- Providing further information, such as the application form and details of the bursary, following enrolment for all new entrants to the school in an enrolment pack
- Identifying students eligible for free school meals, young carers and those with an EHCP and give information about the bursary and have contact with a senior member of the sixth form and SEN teams.

The school will ensure that, in any marketing materials and the application form, procedures for how the school maintains confidentiality are outlined to encourage more students to apply for the bursary.

4. Bursary fund statement

A bursary fund statement will be published every year on the school website. The bursary fund statement will outline the following:

- How the school will use its funding
- The eligibility criteria for the bursary
- Terms and conditions for receiving the bursary, e.g. attendance and behaviour requirements
- The type of support offered through the bursary, e.g. with transport, books and equipment
- Whether the bursary fund contributes to other costs, e.g. attending university open days and interviews
- A statement explaining that the support available to students is from the bursary fund provided by the DfE

5. Eligibility

Students who are aged 16 or over and under 19 years old on 31 August before the academic year in question may qualify for bursaries for that academic year.

Students aged 19 or over can receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18, or if they have an EHCP, provided they remain eligible and the school determines that they need the support to continue their participation.

Students aged 19 or over will not be eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

The school will only pay bursaries to students aged 16 or over.

Students on distance learning provision will not likely need help from the bursary, but in instances where they require financial help, the school will provide support in-kind, e.g. a temporary travel pass to attend exams.

Students can apply more than once if their circumstances change, in this case, they will be reassessed.

Most students who receive a bursary will get a tailored award from the discretionary bursary. Students in need of more support can apply for a vulnerable bursary.

6. Discretionary bursaries

The school will ensure that discretionary funding is allocated to the students who are most in need of financial support. The school's eligibility criteria for receiving a discretionary bursary will include:

- Students living in a low-income household
- Students who have additional responsibilities, such as being a young carer or parent.
- Students who travel to school from outside of Seaford.

Discretionary bursaries may be awarded for students in low-income households. The school will use household income, in some way, to help establish the amount of support awarded to a student, if possible.

The award of the bursary will be dependent on the level of income of the household.

Students who apply will be assessed individually. This assessment will be documented and evidence to support the claims will be obtained and retained for auditing purposes.

The assessment will be based on a student's financial needs and the school will consider any unearned income, such as shares or investments, savings, and rental income.

The school will not make payments to students without considering the actual needs of each student.

The school will use in-kind payments over cash payments for discretionary bursaries wherever possible.

The school will manage the discretionary bursary to keep payments within budget. Where possible, the school will retain a small emergency fund from its allocation to support students who face exceptional circumstances during the year due to a change in their situation that impacts on their ability to participate in education – evidence of a student's eligibility for emergency funds, the individual assessment and their actual participation costs will be held for audit purposes as for any other bursary award.

7. Vulnerable bursaries

The school's eligibility criteria for receiving a vulnerable bursary will include students who are:

- In care.
- Previously been in care
- Receiving Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and/or someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or a partner.
- Receiving Personal Independence Payments in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in their own right.

Students who are in one or more of these categories can apply for a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200.

Where a vulnerable student is on a course lasting 30 weeks or more and is participating full-time, they will be eligible to receive up to £1,200; students on study programmes of less than 30 weeks will receive a pro-rata amount the school will consider the number of hours involved in eligible student's study programmes when deciding if a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

The school may pay a student in a vulnerable group more than £1,200 if it believes the student needs extra help to remain in education; the extra payment will be paid from the school's discretionary bursary allocation. The rationale for such a decision will be included as part of the school's auditable records.

The school will only pay students the amount they need to access education, based on individual assessment. Students will not automatically receive £1,200 or a set amount of funding unless this is in line with their actual financial need.

Proof will be needed to evidence that a student is eligible for the bursary, for example:

- **In care or recently left 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)

- **In receipt of Universal Credit:** copies of the Universal Credit Award notice from the last three months to estimate assumed income for the year 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
- **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 a funding claim to the DfE once sufficient evidence has been provided and the school has confirmed that the student needs financial support to participate.

The school will be responsible for assessing whether students are eligible to receive a vulnerable bursary.

The school may decide that, although a student may be eligible for a bursary, as they fall within one or more of the vulnerable groups, the bursary is not required as they do not have any financial need and do not need further support. If financial needs are already met and there are no other costs or they do not require the maximum award, the school may decide not to allocate a bursary to the student – 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 the school decides that a student is ineligible for funding in accordance with the above criteria, the school will explain to the student and/or the student's parents the aim of bursary funding and why it is appropriate to not award any in this instance.

If a student or the student's parents still want to claim a bursary for vulnerable groups, they must inform the school. The school will then consider the particular circumstances in each case and assess whether:

- No bursary should be awarded, as the student has no financial needs; or
- A reduced bursary should be awarded, as the level of financial help needed is limited.

The school will ensure its bursary application form is clear about the possibility of no award or a reduced award.

8. Paying bursary funding to eligible students

The school will aim to pay all funding in-kind, using cash payments only where necessary.

Payment in-kind may include, for example, travel passes, or essential books or equipment.

Where in-kind payments are given to students within vulnerable groups, the school will explain the value of these payments to the student and how these have been deducted from the total £1,200.

Where, in rare circumstances, in-kind payments are not practical students may be reimbursed, the funding will be paid by BACS transfer to the student's own bank account.

Payments will not be paid into another person's bank account unless exceptional circumstances mean that a student is unable to administer their own account. If a student cannot manage their own funds, the school will consider who can manage the bursary on the student's behalf.

The school has the right to determine how often payments are made – when doing so, the following will be considered:

- The reason the bursary was awarded
- The student's circumstances
- Local arrangements

The school has the right to insist that students only spend bursary payments on the support that has been identified as necessary to help them access education, e.g. to pay for travel to school costs.

The school will adhere to good practice guidelines to make termly payments to students.

The school will not pay bursaries to students in large or lump sums.

In order to decide how best to use individual students' bursary funding, the school will employ the following procedures:

- Priority areas are addressed first, including travel to school, equipment costs and support with studies
- Students are allocated a higher amount of funding at the beginning of their course to address the priority areas

The bursary fund cannot be used to:

- provide learning support services that schools give to students. Examples include counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring or support such as servicing laptops.
- Support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the student's study programme goals and course objectives.
- Support the cost of foreign/overseas field trips where the content can be found within England at a cheaper cost and/or support the costs of field trips that are not an essential part of a student's study programme.
- Support general household incomes/general living costs (rent, bills, wi-fi etc) This is out of scope and would be subject to the Social Security Amendment (Students and Income-related Benefits) Regulations 2000

If students or their parents have any queries about payments, they should contact the finance team on finance@seafordhead.org

The school may use up to five percent of its allocation from the DfE for administrative costs.

9. Conditions for receiving bursary funding

Receipt of a vulnerable or discretionary bursary will be conditional on the student meeting the agreed standards set by the school.

The conditions of payment will be clear and accessible to students, as well as being thoroughly explained as part of the induction process.

Evidence that the student has seen and agreed to the conditions will be kept for audit, such as an agreement signed by the student.

Students in receipt of bursaries must have 95% attendance at timetabled lessons, unless the absence is authorised. Consideration will be given to the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

In line with the school's Attendance and Absence Policy, students that are absent due to sickness will be expected to present a note from a qualified medical practitioner if their absence is longer than three days.

Vacation breaks outside timetabled school holiday times are not permitted.

Students in receipt of bursaries will be expected to abide by the Behaviour Policy of the school.

Where there are concerns regarding a student's attendance or behaviour, the school will discuss the issue with the student and consider individual exceptional circumstances before withholding any payments. In all cases, sanctioning will not occur to the extent a student's ability to attend education is undermined.

The school will ensure that all parents and students are aware of the possible impact that attendance may have on payments, outlined in the application form.

The school will stop payments where a student has been absent for a period of four consecutive weeks or more, excluding holidays, and where a student withdraws themselves from a study programme.

Money may be taken back from students if it has not been spent for the reasons it was awarded to them. Before doing so, the school will always consider the impact of this on the student.

The school may specify that students return any books and equipment purchased for them through the bursary, such as a laptop, at the end of their study programme for use by other students. This will be clearly communicated to students and their parents upon confirming eligibility for the bursary.

The school will require receipts for expenditure, where in rare occasions it is paid in cash, to confirm that funding is being used for the reason it was awarded. For standard weekly costs, e.g. travel, receipts will be collected for each term. In all cases, students will not be asked to incur expenditure and provide a receipt prior to receiving funding – payment will be made first and a receipt provided afterwards, as necessary.

10. Recycling bursaries

The school will be able to recycle unused funding for bursaries for vulnerable groups, e.g. if a student leaves early after only receiving part of their bursary (until **30 April 2027**).

Where the school has accrued funds as specified above, it will use these funds for another student, rather than claiming for the full £1,200, e.g. if a student left and £700 was unspent, the school will only claim £500 towards another eligible student.

If the school has enough funds to cover the costs of a full bursary (£1,200), it will submit a funding claim showing a value of zero to the DfE and use the amount to fund the new student.

If the school decides that a student is in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups, but does not have any actual financial need, it will submit a funding claim showing a zero amount.

The school will be able to add any funding for bursaries for vulnerable groups it has claimed, but no longer needs, for eligible students for discretionary bursaries. Funds will be allocated in this way on a case-by-case basis after assessing students' needs.

The school can also carry forward any unspent funds to the next academic year – any carried funds will only be used to support students in line with this policy, and will not be added to general funds. Unspent funds carried forward will be used before using the school's new academic year allocation.

If the school has no other students who are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups and funds have been claimed in error, it will contact the DfE and arrange to return the funds.

11. Student declarations

Students and/or their parents will sign a declaration when they apply for either a vulnerable or discretionary bursary, confirming that any evidence given in support of the application is correct.

By signing the declaration, the student and their parents are agreeing to all the conditions and eligibility criteria.

The school will retain copies of the declaration and supporting documentation for six years – this includes:

For vulnerable groups:

- A copy of the funding claim sent to DfE
- Evidence showing that the student is eligible, in line with this policy.
- Evidence of payments received from the DfE, e.g. bank statements.
- A copy of the student's individual assessment of actual financial need.
- Receipts for purchases or in-kind support provided to the student, for example, bus pass, equipment or book receipts
- Attendance evidence to support payments

For discretionary bursaries:

- Evidence used to assess eligibility and determine household income, such as P60's, self-employment accounts, wage slips, a letter from DWP, copies of online statements for UC
- A copy of the student's individual assessment of actual financial need including a breakdown of the calculation that has determined the amount awarded.
- Receipts for purchases made, e.g. bus pass, or book/equipment receipts.
- Attendance evidence to support payments

All data will be handled confidentially and stored securely in line with the Data Protection Policy.

12. Managing bursary applications

The school will use its own application form for the bursary fund.

The application form will capture all the relevant information needed to assess the application in line with this policy, including:

- Household income.
- The student's actual financial needs to support their participation.
- Specific deadline dates.
- The student's signature indicating they have seen and agreed to the terms and conditions of the funding and that all information provided is accurate.

All applications for the 16-19 bursary will be submitted by **18 September 2026** to allow the school to correctly and fairly assess overall demand and distribute discretionary awards.

The school will not, however, implement a final cut-off date for applications, in recognition that a change in needs may arise throughout the academic year.

The date for applications to be submitted will be outlined in the bursary fund statement, the bursary application form and any marketing materials.

Application forms and marketing materials will outline that students who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to receive them, e.g. if they do not have any financial needs or these needs are covered by alternative means.

13. Quality assurance

The school uses the DfE's 16-19 bursary fund checklist (see appendix 1) to ensure the DfE requirements have been complied with.

In addition, the following information is collected:

- The application process
- The decision to award the specified amount of bursary
- The funds that have been issued to the student

The school maintains written records of the following:

- The number of applications received
- The value of all bursaries awarded
- The purpose of all bursaries awarded
- Which applications qualified for the bursary and which did not
- Brief descriptions of the school's justification for any decision to award a bursary or not

The school retains copies of any documents the student has signed to give formal agreement to their conditions for payment, as well as any others mentioned in this section, for six years.

14. Fraud

The school will be responsible for investigating any suspected instances of fraud relating to bursary fund applications.

Students and their families will be informed that providing false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect payments or overpayment may result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

If evidence comes to light that supplied information is misleading or fraudulent, the school will stop any further payments and will attempt to recover any payments already provided to the student.

Where significant fraud is identified, the school will report this to the DfE. Significant fraud involves one or more of the following:

- The amount of money is in excess of £1,200
- The particulars of the fraud are novel, unusual, systematic or complex
- There is likely to be great public interest due to the nature of the fraud or the people involved

15. Conditions for using the bursary

The bursary fund will not be used by the school for any reasons which would give them a competitive advantage over other schools, such as:

- Enrolment or administration fees imposed by the school.
- Fees for access to facilities in the school.
- Block subsidy of the canteen.
- Block subsidy of transport.
- Block provision of equipment, material or books.
- Bonus payments to reward attendance or achievement.

Block payments to students for attendance, irrespective of their actual financial need, will not be paid.

The bursary fund will only be used for supporting students who have a genuine financial difficulty which might prevent them from continuing in education, rather than acting as an incentive for attendance.

16. Complaints and appeals

All complaints and appeals must be made in writing in accordance with the Complaints Procedures Policy.

If the complaint or appeal concerns operational processes or customer service for a vulnerable bursary funding claim, the DfE will deal with the case.

The school will act as a first point of contact for students who have complaints and will support students as much as possible throughout the Complaints Procedure.

Complaints made regarding the school and the school's provision of support will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out in the Complaints Procedures Policy.

17. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the finance team. The next scheduled review date is **May 2027**.

The school will ensure that this policy is implemented correctly and appropriately at all times.

The school will communicate any changes to this policy to all staff and relevant stakeholders.



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Appendix 1

16 to 19 Bursary Fund checklist

You should use this checklist when assessing student applications for support from the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.

Eligibility: All Bursaries

- ☐ Student meets the age criteria
- ☐ Eligible education provision.
- ☐ Student meets the residency criteria for post-16 provision
- ☐ Evidence of eligibility has been retained.

Bursary for defined vulnerable groups

- ☐ Student falls within one of the defined vulnerable groups for example, in receipt of the specified benefits in their own right or in care/care leaver.
- ☐ Financial needs assessment carried out to confirm actual financial need and amount of support required. **No student should automatically receive £1,200.**
- ☐ Appropriate evidence seen and copies retained to confirm student's eligibility.
- ☐ Support awarded in kind (bus pass, meal vouchers, books or equipment purchased on student's behalf). Receipts should be retained.
- ☐ Award letter issued to student confirming the amount of support, what support will be made in-kind and payment conditions.

Discretionary bursary

- ☐ Evidence to confirm the student meets the institution's bursary fund criteria, including household income and statement of actual participation costs.
- ☐ Evidence of income and overall eligibility obtained, and copies retained.
- ☐ Assessment of student's actual financial needs carried out. **Block, blanket or flat rate payments are not permitted – the bursary award should reflect the actual costs the student has.**
- ☐ Support awarded in kind (bus pass, meal vouchers, books or equipment purchased on student's behalf). Receipts should be retained.
- ☐ Award letter issued to student confirming the amount of support, what support will be made in-kind and payment conditions.