

Rugby Free Secondary School Sixth Form Bursary Policy 2026-27

This policy is based on advice from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-provider-guide/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2026-to-2027>

Definitions

'In care' is defined as: children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the 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 of the Children Act 1989)

'Care leaver' is defined as:

- A young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16, or
- A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

How we use the bursary fund

Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. The fund is intended to support students aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- 1) Bursaries for defined vulnerable students
- 2) Discretionary Bursaries

Discretionary Bursaries can be used for the following support:

- Help with specific course-related costs such as books and other resources that are needed for your courses, educational visits (including University Open Days & Interviews) are also included.
- Contributions to the cost of work experience placements
- If you live more than 2 miles away from school we may reimburse bus travel expenses from weekly, monthly, or 3 monthly bus passes only. Individual bus tickets will not be accepted.
- If you are not eligible for FSM you will also receive a contribution towards meals in the school canteen, if funds allow.

Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2026 to 2027 academic year:

- Students must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August 2026.

- Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also receive public funding.
- Students must meet the residency criteria in the [ESFA funding regulations for post-16 provision](#).

Vulnerable Student Bursaries

Students with a financial need, who meet one of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (NB: those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after);
- Care leavers;
- Receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner; or
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own right 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 actual 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 be up to a maximum of £1,200 per year for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, we will look at cases individually and base the outcome on a particular student's needs. Students will only receive the amount they actually need to participate and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

We 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.

Discretionary bursaries

Students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy one or more of the following criteria, in addition to those outlined above:

- A bursary may be available to Post 16 students who are eligible and registered for Free School Meals, but being in receipt of these is not a guarantee.
- If you are NOT in receipt of Free School Meals but your household income is below £30,000 you will be eligible. You will need to provide documentary evidence of your household income with your application.
- If you or your family are in receipt of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit, then you are entitled to a Discretionary Bursary.

Students who do not satisfy any of the criteria listed in this section, but who are able to demonstrate financial hardship arising from other reasons, may apply for a discretionary bursary.

In assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income – below £30,000 per annum.
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the institution, or a location for a placement
- The number of dependent children in the student's household
- The requirements of their study programme
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help

There is no set limit for the amount of discretionary bursary that can be awarded to students. We will base all decisions around which students receive a discretionary bursary, and how much bursary they receive, on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a discretionary bursary if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

Evidence

All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence. Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:

- Previous 3 to 6 months' worth of payslips
- P60
- Written confirmation of a student's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority and/or
- Written confirmation of a benefit award or tax credit notice, in the name of the student (for either bursary) or the parent (for the discretionary bursary)

Applications

Applications should ideally be submitted by 2nd October 2026 to allow enough time for our school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis.

However, we acknowledge that students' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole school year.

Applicants will be notified in writing whether their application has been successful, together with the amount of funding awarded. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their application for a bursary, they must follow the school's complaints procedure.

Payment process

As a school, we are unable to make payments to students directly and so you must receive the funds in one of the following ways:

- By uploading a receipt for an item on the list above which you have already purchased to the Bursary+ website (log in to your account and on your Home Page there is a 'My Requests' button)
- By sending a screenshot or link to an item, with a request for the Sixth Form to purchase it, via the Bursary+ website (My Requests). This option should only be used if you cannot afford to buy the item in advance, before being reimbursed.

Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

Payments of the bursary are conditional on students meeting the following conditions in relation to their standards of attendance and behaviour:

- Meet the requirements of the school attendance policy
- Meet the requirements of the Home School Learning Agreement (which was signed by all students upon enrolment)

All students are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions.

Students who fail to meet these conditions may have their payment withheld, but we will always take students' individual circumstances into consideration. This includes considering the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

We will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays) and where students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

We reserve the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded. However, we will consider the impact of such an action on the individual student before taking a final decision to do so.

Change in circumstances

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

Record keeping

Any paperwork and documents we retain for audit purposes will be kept securely in line with our data protection policy, privacy notices and record retention schedule. Copies of individual records can be provided on request.

This policy will be reviewed annually.