

16-19 Bursary Policy

History of policy changes/review

Author: Head of 6th Form

Authorising Body: ELT

Review Period: Annual

Date	Page	Details of Change
September 2023	All	New Application Form
September 2024	All	Review
September 2025	5	Funding claims from SBSS
	6	Added guidance for Asylum seekers
	8	Updated information for Vulnerable bursary criteria

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Statement of Intent

At Briarwood 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 to help eligible students with the essential costs of their studies, e.g. resources, equipment, meals, clothing, travel costs and any extra-curricular activities the school has deemed essential to the student's study programme.

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 Head of Sixth Form.
- 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.
- Sharing and acquiring best practice through partnerships with neighbouring settings.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation they face, to enable them to remain in education. To be eligible to receive a 16-19 Bursary the young person must be aged 16 or over and under 19 on 31 August in the year of application. Where a young person turns 19 during their programme of study, they can continue to be supported to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.

Students in one of the defined vulnerable groups can apply for a Vulnerable Groups Bursary via the Student Bursary Support Service. The Head of 6th Form can provide further information on request.

Those experiencing financial disadvantages relating to course-related activity can be supported using the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund. Briarwood School receives an annual allocation from the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund via the Education Funding Agency (EFA). Once these funds have been awarded to eligible pupils there is no guarantee that further funding will be available to support learners during the academic year.

Framework

- This policy is based on advice from the Department of Education (DfE) on the 16-19 bursary fund for the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

This policy also operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour and Pastoral Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Briarwood School's Responsibilities

All elements of the sixth form Bursary process are the responsibility of the Head of Sixth Form

Briarwood School will be responsible for setting eligibility criteria for students and will set conditions for receiving the bursary. How to apply for bursaries will be straightforward and confidential.

The needs of each student who applies for the bursary will be assessed by Briarwood school and evidence will be obtained to support each application. Briarwood school will claim vulnerable bursaries from the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) for each eligible student upon application. Records will be kept of all assessments and payments in kind. The application process will maintain confidentiality.

Funding claims need to be submitted directly to the DfE at defined points in the year whenever new students are verified as meeting the criteria and having a financial need. (Previously schools would draw down funding or bursaries for vulnerable groups from the Student Bursary Support Service).

Submit your claims are submitted through the [DfE Sign-in account](#).

The first funding claim window will open on 08.09.2025 and close on 12.11.2025.

Payments will be made in February 2026

The second funding claim window will open on 05.01.2026 and close on 11.02.2026.

Payments will be made in April 2026

The third and final window will open on 18.05.2026 and close on 01.07.2026.

Recovery action and any additional payments will be made in September 2026

See Section 8 of the [2025/26 guidance](#) for more details.

Briarwood 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.

Briarwood school will inform the ESFA of the total amount of any unspent funds by completing the ESFA [online enquiry form](#) no later than 31 March each year. Briarwood school will ensure it completes the individualised learner record (ILR) or census fields as required.

Raising awareness of the 16-19 Bursary Fund

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

- Posting information about the bursary on the school website and other marketing materials in addition to 6th Form noticeboards
- Distributing information at transition meetings for Year 11 pupils
- Providing bursary information to all new entrants to Briarwood school 6th Form
- Providing tutors with information to inform discussions between tutors and students
- Working with social workers, who help the most disadvantaged students, to identify those who may be eligible for a vulnerable group bursary
- Inform families of the financial support available termly throughout the year

To identify students who may be eligible for vulnerable group bursaries, Briarwood school will work with the Local Authority (LA), Looked After Children (LAC) education services and care leaver services to help and encourage relevant students and their families to apply for the bursary. In addition, Briarwood school will work with the LA to establish local data-sharing agreements to share information about which students may be eligible and who should be supported to make an application.

Briarwood school will use the Get Information About Schools Government website to establish whether students were in receipt of the pupil premium funding in Year 11 which may indicate whether they are eligible for a discretionary bursary. The school will proactively approach identified students to see if they require support. Briarwood school will ensure that, in any marketing materials and the application form, procedures for how the institution maintains confidentiality are outlined.

Bursary fund statement

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

- How Briarwood school will use its funding
- The eligibility criteria for the bursary
- Terms and conditions for receiving the bursary, e.g. attendance
- The type of support offered through the bursary (in-kind payments), e.g. with transport, resources, meals, clothing, equipment, resources and any Extra-Curricular activities the School has deemed essential to the student's study programme
- Whether the bursary fund contributes to other costs, e.g. transition
- A statement explaining that the support available to students is from the bursary fund

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 will be able to receive a bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18, or if they have an Education Health Care plan, provided they remain eligible and Briarwood school determines they need the support to continue their participation.

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

Students will be permitted to apply more than once if their circumstances change. In this case, they will be reassessed, to determine if there are any exceptional circumstances to consider.

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body which assesses quality, e.g. Ofsted. The provision must also be funded directly by the ESFA or by the ESFA via the Local Authority.

Students must meet the residency criteria in the [DfE funding rules for 16 to 19 provision](#).

Asylum seekers

Accompanied asylum seekers under 18 with an adult relative or partner, and asylum seekers aged 18 and above are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum seekers who have not had asylum refused.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are:

- The responsibility of the local authority
- To be treated as 'looked after' children
- Eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, where they have a financial need

When these students reach 18 years old, we will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary as a student from a defined vulnerable group if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the upper age limit.

Young offenders

Students convicted or cautioned for a criminal offence, i.e. young offenders, will be able to apply for a bursary if they:

- Are serving a non-custodial sentence.
- Have been released early from a custodial sentence, except on temporary licence.
- Have been remanded to a non-secure institution.

Young offenders cannot apply for a bursary if they:

- Are serving a custodial sentence.
- Have been released from a custodial sentence on temporary licence.
- Have been remanded to a secure institution.

As with all bursaries, the school will provide in-kind support to young offenders rather than cash payments wherever possible.

Discretionary bursaries

At Briarwood school, we will ensure that discretionary funding is allocated to the students who are most in need of financial support. Students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy 1 or more of the following criteria.

- Students living in a low-income household.
- Students from a single parent family or have one or more dependent siblings in their family.
- Students in receipt of Free School Meals.
- Students who travel greater than three miles to Briarwood school.
- Students identified as high need using the School's Vulnerable + Criteria.

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

The amount awarded will be dependent on the amount of income – this will be allocated on different levels. 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.

Briarwood school will not make blanket or flat-rate payments to all students or students in the income bands outlined above without considering the actual needs of each student.

Briarwood school will use in-kind payments over cash payments for discretionary bursaries.

Briarwood school will manage the discretionary bursary to keep in-kind payments within budget. Where possible, Briarwood 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.

In individual cases of severe hardship, the bursary fund will be used where appropriate to provide food support for a student on the days they attend their programme of study. Food support will be provided where Briarwood school believes the student to be in real need, and will not require checks on household income or other evidence-gathering that would usually be required.

Where food support is provided, copies of the following records will be retained for audit purposes:

- The total number of students provided food support
- The number of days this support is given to each student
- The total value of support given to each student along with the rationale for its provision
- Signed confirmation of receipt funding by the student/parent or actual spend receipts

Each setting should exercise their discretion in each case as this scheme is not intended to continue on an ongoing basis for any individual pupil. This flexibility relates to food support only.

Vulnerable bursaries

Eligibility criteria for receiving a vulnerable bursary will include students who meet one of the following four criteria below:

- The student is in care (this includes those classed as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child).
- Care Leavers
- Receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) 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 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.

Proof will be required to evidence the above eligibility criteria for the bursary.

Via the application form, the setting will remind parents that they will not be able to continue to claim Child Benefit if the student successfully applies for ESA.

Students who are in one or more of these categories will be able to 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 for equipment, transport, school meals and other means/services that will allow them to access education; students on study programmes of less than 30 weeks will receive a pro-rata amount. Briarwood school will consider the number of hours involved in eligible students' study programmes when deciding if a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

Briarwood 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 Briarwood school's discretionary bursary allocation. The rationale for such a decision will be included as part of Briarwood school's auditable records.

Briarwood school will only make in-kind payments to students/families 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.

Briarwood school will only submit a funding claim once sufficient evidence has been provided and Briarwood 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. Briarwood 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 institution may decide not to allocate a bursary to the student.

Where Briarwood school decides that a student is ineligible for funding in accordance with the above criteria, Briarwood 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. A letter will be issued, to reflect this information, and a face to face meeting offered to follow this up.

If a student or the student's parents still want to claim a bursary for vulnerable groups, they must inform Briarwood school. Briarwood 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.

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

Paying bursary funding to eligible students

Awards from the Bursary Fund will be made in kind to suppliers. Where in-kind payments are given to students, Briarwood school will explain the value of these payments to the student/their family and how these have been deducted from the total £1,200.

Briarwood 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

Briarwood 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 costs.

Briarwood school will not pay bursaries to students in large or lump sums. In order to decide how best to use individual students' bursary funding, Briarwood school will employ the following procedures:

- Priority areas are addressed first, including travel to Briarwood 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
- A percentage of the funding may be kept back as a hardship fund to respond to any emergencies that may arise during the year

If students or their parents have any queries about payments, they should contact the Head of Sixth form on Sarah.Lane@bristol-schools.uk or [01173532651](tel:01173532651).

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.

Evidence that the student has seen and agreed to the conditions will be kept for audit, such as an agreement signed by the student or their family if the student does not have capacity to make decisions for their finances, in accordance with the '[Student declarations](#)' section.

Students in receipt of bursaries must have **80%** attendance, unless the absence is authorised. Consideration will be given to the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness or other exceptional circumstances.

Briarwood school will ensure that all parents and students and their families are aware of the possible impact that attendance may have on their application.

The school will stop payments if the agreed conditions of grant are not met, however, individual circumstances will be considered before doing so. If a student withdraws from school, payments will also stop.

The school will specify that students return any resources 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.

Briarwood school will highlight to students and parents the impact of receipt of the 16-19 bursary fund on other benefits. This includes information that:

- Receipt of bursary funding will not impact the receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, e.g. Income Support.
- Receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Employment Support Allowance will mean parents can no longer receive certain benefits for that child, e.g. Child Benefit.

Recycling bursaries

The school will be able to accrue some unused funding for bursaries for vulnerable groups during the academic year, e.g. if a student leaves early after only receiving part of their bursary, or if the full amount was not paid as the student did not meet the agreed conditions (until 30 April 2025).

Where the school has accrued funds as specified above, it will use these funds for another student, rather than claiming for the full amount e.g. if a student left and £700 was unspent, Briarwood school will only claim £500 towards another eligible student. The school will be able to recycle unused funding for bursaries following the rules and regulations defined by the ESFA as required.

If the school has sufficient funds to cover the costs of a full bursary, it will submit a funding claim showing a value of zero 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 (from 1 May 2025). Funds will be allocated in this way on a case-by-case basis after assessing students' needs.

Briarwood school will consider carrying forward any unspent funds to the next academic year, but not for more than one 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 Briarwood school's new academic year allocation.

If Briarwood 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 ESFA and arrange to return the funds.

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/parents are agreeing to the conditions and eligibility criteria.

The school will retain copies of the declaration and supporting documentation for 6 years; including:

For vulnerable groups:

- A copy of the funding claim submitted.
- Evidence showing that the student is eligible, in line with this policy and ESFA regulations.
- Evidence of payments received from the SBSS, e.g. bank statements.
- A copy of the student’s individual assessment of actual financial need including a breakdown of the calculation that has determined the amount required.
- Receipts for purchases or in-kind support provided to the student.
- Evidence to support the value of payments made to the students.
- Attendance evidence.

For discretionary bursaries:

- Evidence used to assess eligibility and household income, e.g. P60’s, self employment accounts, wage slips, a letter from DWP and 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 required.
- Receipts for purchases made, e.g. bus pass, lunch receipts, equipment invoices.
- Evidence to support the value of payments made to the students.
- Attendance evidence

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

Managing applications

Briarwood school uses 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 or parents’ signature in the case the student does not have capacity to make decisions on their finances 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 31 July of each year wherever possible, to allow the school to correctly and fairly assess overall demand and distribute discretionary awards. The school will not, however, implement a cut-off date for applications, in recognition that some 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.

Quality assurance

The setting will use the ESFA's '16 to 19 Bursary Fund Checklist' to confirm which documents have been provided for each student, as outlined in the 'Student declarations' these relate to the following:

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

The setting will maintain 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 institution's justification for any decision to award a bursary or not.

The setting will retain 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.

Auditing, Assurance and Fraud

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

The school will ensure that appropriate processes are in place to record bursary applications and expenditure at student level. This will include:

- A breakdown of the value, including the purpose, type of cost and whether paid or not.
- A brief justification for the decision.

The school will ensure that it can clearly evidence the following:

- The application process.
- How students were assessed as eligible.
- How the decision has been made to award the specific amount of bursary based on financial needs.
- The funds that have been issued to each student.

Copies of documents signed by students to give formal agreement to their conditions for payment will be retained.

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 setting will stop any further payments and will attempt to recover any payments already provided to the student.

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

- 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

Conditions for using the bursary

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

- Enrolment or administration fees imposed by the setting.
- Fees for access to facilities in the setting.
- Block subsidy of the food provider.
- Block subsidy of transport.
- Block provision of equipment, material or books.
- Bonus payments to reward attendance or achievement.
- Payments to support students general living costs.

The bursary will not be used as a way of incentivising attendance or as a marketing tool to encourage students to this this setting over another.

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.

No payments will be made in the form of cash or bank transfers.

Complaints and appeals

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

If the complaint or appeal concerns operational processes or customer service for a vulnerable bursary funding claim, the SBSS will deal with the case. If the case is not resolved following this, it will be passed to ESFA.

Briarwood 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 setting and the setting's provision of support will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out in the [Complaints Policy](#).

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Headteacher and will be implemented correctly and appropriately at all times. The school will communicate policy changes to staff and stakeholders.