

## **16-19 Vulnerable Bursary and Discretionary Bursary Policy Document**

### **Statement**

The purpose of this policy, in accordance with the guidelines set down by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), is to:

1. Ensure that the funds received annually from the ESFA are targeted towards the most vulnerable students facing the greatest financial need to ensure that they are supported with the costs faced by continuing their education.
2. Ensure that remaining funds are distributed fairly to students whose household income may present a barrier to continuing education.
3. Ensure financial sustainability through flexible development and review, thereby preventing an overspend in any annual cycle of funding.
4. Ensure that any personal financial details remain secure and confidential.
5. Set relevant controls to minimise the risk of fraudulent claims.

### **ESFA Bursary Fund Allocations**

The school is responsible for distributing vulnerable student bursaries to eligible students.

The ESFA advises the school of its allocation of discretionary bursary funds for the relevant academic year.

A 5% administrative cost and a 10% contingency fund to meet exceptional circumstances will be applied. To provide for these costs, 15% will be withheld from the total ESFA allocation.

The discretionary funding will be allocated fairly to eligible students.

### **Vulnerable Bursary (Level 1)**

The highest level of support of up to £1,200 a year will be paid to those students in one or more of the following categories:

- A young person in care
- A care leaver
- A young person in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own right
- A disabled young person in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living or Personal Independence Payments in their own right.

## Discretionary Bursary Fund (Level 2)

The Discretionary Bursary (Level 2) will support students from households with the lowest incomes. For guidance, this would normally be students:

- Entitled to free school meals, and / or
- Whose families receive income related benefits, where earned family income is below £16,190 per annum.

Information on entitlement to free school meals can be found on the Northamptonshire County Council website. <http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/Pages/free-school-meals.aspx>

## Discretionary Individual Hardship Payments (Level 3)

Discretionary individual payments may be awarded to students that face identifiable financial barriers to education and who are not eligible to receive a Vulnerable Bursary (Level 1) or Discretionary Bursary (Level 2) for specific educational needs. Individual hardship payments will be made for specific educational purposes. For guidance, this would normally be students:

- Whose families receive income related benefits, or where earned family income is between £16,190 and £25, 521 per annum.

It is anticipated, however, that funds under this scheme may be limited, and will only be made available after all Level 2 Discretionary Bursaries have been allocated. Each application will be assessed according to individual financial need.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for the bursary students must:

- Be aged 16 or over and under 19 on 31 August 2017 or
- Be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2017 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2017 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18.
- Meet the residency criteria ESFA 2017 to 2018 academic year funding regulations for post 16 provision.
- Be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body which assures quality, the provision must also be either funded directly by the ESFA or by ESFA via a local authority.

## Educational Needs

Bursaries are to be used to meet the following types of educational needs (or costs), although this list is not exhaustive:

- Books / educational equipment / educational materials.
- Examination fees and re-sit fees.
- UCAS application fees / travel to open days.
- Clothing (to support the 6<sup>th</sup> Form Dress Code).
- Educational visits / field trips which are course related.
- Transport costs to school.
- Laptops will only be considered for students that fall in to the Discretionary Bursary Level 2 category.

**Wherever possible, payment for goods and services will be made by the school on behalf of the student. In the case of laptops awarded under the discretionary scheme, these must be returned to school at the end of the course so that they can be reused by other students.**

## Evidence

Recent and original documentation, to determine status (vulnerable bursaries) or household income (discretionary bursaries) is required to be submitted together with the completed application form. Evidence of household income would normally take the form of:

- Benefit notification, such as Income Support or Universal Credit in a student's own right.
- HMRC Tax Credit Award Notice (renewal form will not be accepted).
- P60 and payslips.
- Statement of income from self-employment agreed by the HMRC.
- Bank statements (showing unearned income).

## Conditions

Bursaries are payable subject to certain criteria being met by the student relating to attendance, behaviour and effort. The criteria are:

- Ensuring work is completed and deadlines met.
- Attendance – 95% or above across the academic year. Good punctuality at all times.
- Behaviour rated as either good or satisfactory as measured by the Behaviour Policy.
- Having at all times appropriate educational material and equipment in school.

Bursary payments may be withheld if these conditions are not met. Regular reviews of attendance, behaviour and effort will take place to determine whether the student can continue to receive bursary support.

A termly letter will be sent to the student asking for confirmation that there have been no changes in the student's household's financial circumstances.

## Payments

Vulnerable bursary payments to be paid monthly, subject to the conditions set out above being maintained.

However, individual hardship payments may be made in single one off amounts during the academic year to meet a specific arising need.

Payments will usually be made by BACS transfer, and wherever possible, goods and services will be purchased by the school on behalf of the student. Where money is provided to the student for a specific purpose, students will be required to provide the school with the receipt to confirm the money has been spent for the purpose it was intended.

## Application Process

Bursary Scheme applications are to be made to the Finance Office along with the required evidence. The school will then process the application and will advise students, in writing, of the outcome. Students need to apply for a bursary each academic year.

Applications may be received in year where a change of circumstances has occurred leading to financial hardship or qualifying new in year starters.

The school will also consider further assistance for any successful applicant due to the onset of an unexpected or large expense (such as a school trip) or a change in circumstances home leading to financial hardship.

## Security of Personal Information

All personal information and evidence submitted in support of the application will be stored securely and will remain strictly confidential.

## Appeals

Once you have submitted the application form, it will be assessed and you will be informed in writing whether you are eligible to receive a bursary and the amount. You have the right to appeal against a decision that the school has made, if you believe it to be wrong and can provide evidence to support this. Appeals should be made, in writing including letters of support from people who understand your situation, within 14 days to the school's Finance Office. Final decisions for appeals will be made by a panel consisting of the Business Manager, Assistant Principal and a Staff Governor. The outcome of the appeal will then be communicated to you in writing within 14 days.

## Fraud

Parents / carers, together with the student, are required to sign the application form to confirm that the details given are correct and that they will notify the school of any change in circumstances. Parents and students are made aware that, in signing the application form, they understand that monies may be reclaimed and eligibility withdrawn should they knowingly provide information which is discovered to be false. An application found to be false or incomplete may be referred to the Department for Education and the Police. The student could face prosecution as a result.