



# Central Region Schools Trust

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## Central Regions Schools Trust

### 16-19 Bursary Policy

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**Recommended by: KS5 Lead**

**Ratified by: Trust Board**

**Signed:** 

**Position: Trust Board Co-Chair**

**Ratification Date: 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

**Review Date: Summer Term 2025**

**Policy Tier (Central/Hub/School): Trust**

### **Central Region Schools Trust: Sixth Central Bursary**

The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education. The fund is money given to post -16 providers by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Some students will experience financial difficulties when entering post 16 education with costs such as transport, food or equipment. Eligibility for the fund is based on the student meeting residency requirements and being on a means tested or disability benefit.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all students who study at one of the Central Region Schools Trust Sixth Form Centres can overcome those barriers by the consistent and fair application of this policy.

Bursaries can be used to support students with the financial costs relating to education and student welfare as follows:

- Uniform/clothing subsidy
- Transport subsidy
- School meals subsidy
- Books and educational resources (including Course Material)
- Trips and Visits
- Examination re-sits
- Any other educational expenses
- NUS Cards
- 16-18 Travel Card
- UCAS Fee

### **Bursary Eligibility**

To be eligible to receive a bursary a student:

- must be aged over 16 and under 19 at 31<sup>st</sup> August in the academic year in which they commence the programme of study.
- must satisfy ESFA residency criteria.

### **Residency**

Students must meet the residency criteria in the ESFA funding regulations.

**Please see Appendix B for information regarding accompanied and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.**

### **Commitment Conditions-to receive the Bursary**

- the student must attend school; every lesson, every day and be on time.
- the student must take all of their examinations.

- the student must be up to date with work for all subjects, including homework, and meet all subject deadlines.

Any student who fails to meet the criteria without sufficient mitigating circumstance will not receive their bursary payment for that fortnight and will need to meet with a member of the Sixth Form team to discuss the reasons/barriers they may be facing.

### **Types of 16 – 19 Bursaries**

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Vulnerable bursary (Priority Group1)
- Discretionary bursary (Priority Group 2 and 3)

### **Vulnerable Bursary Priority Group 1**

The most vulnerable young people may be eligible for a bursary of **up to £1,200** (pro-rata for courses lasting fewer than 30 weeks a year) if they can evidence, they belong to a defined vulnerable group. Larger bursaries can be paid if the Head of Sixth Form considers this necessary to enable the young person to continue in education or training. This group covers

- care leavers
- young people who are looked after
- students in receipt of income support or Universal Credit 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
- receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

**Please see Appendix C for definitions of the above groups**

### **Evidence of Eligibility for the Vulnerable Bursary:**

Students must provide evidence that they are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups to their Head of Sixth Form, copies of this evidence will be retained for auditing purposes.

The Head of Sixth Form in each Sixth Form Centre is responsible for identifying young people who are eligible for this payment as a separate application needs to be made by the centre to the Student Bursary Support Service. In doing so the Head of Sixth Form will require appropriate evidence from the young person, for example:

- a letter setting out the benefit to which the student is entitled; from the relevant agency.
- written confirmation of the young person's current or previous looked after status from the local authority which looks after them or provides their leaving care services.

All young people in the identified vulnerable groups will receive their bursary payments from the Sixth Form Centre in which they are enrolled.

The Sixth Form Centre will not pay a bursary for those that qualify, but do not have any actual financial need and so do not need support from the scheme. For example, their financial needs are already met and/or they have no relevant costs.

### **Discretionary Bursary Priority Group 2**

When a student does not meet the criteria for the vulnerable group, they may still be eligible for support. The criterion for priority group 2 is for students to be eligible for free school meals (FSM). The school will need to be satisfied that the application is genuine following the standard procedures that are currently in operation for the application of FSM.

Students will still be required to submit an application form and identify what they are applying for support with e.g. travel costs, exercise or text books, trips etc.

A cash bursary of **up to £600** (*actual amount assessed based on needs identified*) will be paid to eligible students for the academic year in fortnightly instalments.

The commitments to study, as previously referenced, must also be met for students to continue to receive these payments.

### **Discretionary Bursary Priority Group 3**

Where there is a surplus of funds after the allocation to students in Priority Groups 1 and 2, then students with household incomes of less than £20,817 may apply for a lower level of support determined by their specific needs. The following evidence will be required for students in this group:

- A copy of entitlement to means-tested state benefit or Tax Credit Award Notice confirming household income of less than £20,817.
- Evidence of income from self-employed a P60 or 3 to 6 months work of bank statements as evidence.
- 3 most recent monthly award statements of Universal Credit.

Students will still be required to submit an application form and identify what they are applying for support with e.g. travel costs, exercise or text books, trips etc.

A bursary of **up to £400** (*actual amount assessed based on needs identified*) for the academic year will be paid to eligible students for the academic year paid in fortnightly instalments.

The commitments to study, as previously referenced, must also be met for students to continue to receive these payments.

### **Financial Hardship or other barriers:**

Students whose household income exceeds £20,817 may still apply for a discretionary bursary of **up to £400** (*actual amount assessed based on needs identified*) if they, and their family, are experiencing financial hardship or other barriers to accessing their post 16 education. Where this

is the case students are to provide a letter to the Head of Sixth Form, alongside their application form, detailing their current circumstances and the barriers they are facing. Applications of this nature will be treated in confidence and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Allocation and Payment**

Decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary and how much bursary they receive are based on each students' individual circumstances and their actual financial need. These will vary from student to student depending on, for example their household income, the number of dependent children in the household, the distance they need to travel to school and the requirements of their study programme.

Once it is established who will be supported, the funds will be allocated, and students will be informed in writing of the amount of support they will receive. Some funding will be held back for applicants later in the year or whose personal circumstances change. The allocation criteria will reflect the Sixth Form Centre's Equalities policies and codes of practice and be endorsed by the school's governing body committees.

The use of the 16-19 Bursary Fund to help meet transport costs does not replace the statutory duty on local authorities to make arrangements to facilitate the participation in education or training of young people of sixth form age. Bursaries to help meet transport costs should be targeted to individual students, where those costs have been identified as a real barrier to that student's participation.

Bursaries will not be used for any purpose designed to give students a competitive advantage over other providers, such as the provision of software or hardware that is not widely accessible by the student body.

In the first instance, each Sixth Form Centre will pay students by BACS transfer into their own bank account every two weeks, however they may also make cheque payments to the student or small cash payments where they consider it appropriate to do so. Each Sixth Form Centre will determine the size and frequency of payments, taking account:

- the purpose of the bursary (e.g. one-off or sustained support);
- the young person's circumstances
- the young person's attendance and punctuality
- local administrative arrangements
- Budget available

To apply, a Bursary Application Form **(which can be found on the Sixth Form Centre website)** needs to be completed and submitted, **with evidence of income** by the given deadline to the Head of Sixth Form at the centre of study no later than 30<sup>th</sup> September. All applications submitted will be processed by the end of the first half term of study.

Where financial circumstances change during the academic year, students can submit a new application. All applications will be processed promptly, however, please note no back payments will be made for mid-term applications.

Where a student is not awarded a bursary they may appeal that decision. Students, or their parent/ guardian will be required to put any appeal in writing within 21 days of receiving confirmation of an award or a rejection, making clear the reasons for the appeal, which must prove that the student has been wrongly assessed as falling outside the eligibility criteria. This will be reviewed by the both the Head of Sixth Form and Principal of the relevant Sixth Form Centre.

## **Appendix A: Asylum Seeking Children**

### **Accompanied asylum seeking children (under 18 with an adult relative or partner)**

Asylum seekers are not entitled to public funds. Accompanied asylum seeking children (those under 18 with an adult relative or partner) and those aged 18 and above are entitled to education, but not to public funds. If they are destitute they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials, but they are not eligible for other income.

### **Unaccompanied asylum seeking children**

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children do not receive cash support from the Home Office and bear the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as looked after children and are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups ('in care' group)

## **Appendix B: Vulnerable Bursary Definitions**

### **In Care and Care Leavers**

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund defines 'in care' 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 – section 22 of the Children Act defines the term 'looked after child'.

A '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 of 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.

### **Foster Care, Including Privately Arranged Foster Care:**

A young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, is classed as looked after. They are in a defined vulnerable group ('in care') and eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups.

A child who is privately fostered (in other words, a private arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the child) is not classed as a looked after child and is not eligible for the bursary.

In some instances, a young person may have been in the care of the local authority and the care transferred to another party via a permanent form of fostering such as a Special Guardianship Order. In these circumstances, the young person is defined as having left care so is now a care leaver and are eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups.

Where a young person is already in receipt of payments under the transitional support arrangements and is identified as being in one of the named vulnerable groups part-way through the year, the bursary will be pro-rated accordingly.

### **Universal Credit and Income Support:**

Universal Credit award notifications do not include any information on the benefits they replace. For this reason, the description of the vulnerable group category that is based on receipt of Universal Credit or Income Support has been changed. The revised description confirms that students must be receiving Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them.