



THE COOMBE SECONDARY SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

16 – 19 Bursary Fund Policy

2015 - 2016

1. Introduction

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is a scheme set up by the government to help the most vulnerable young people aged 16-19 continue in full time education. Its purpose is to provide financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation, so that they can remain in education.

2. Categories of Bursary

There are two types of 16-19 bursary

- **Vulnerable Student Bursary** This is a guaranteed bursary of £1200 per year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups.
- **Discretionary bursary** – this is awarded at the Trust’s discretion based on individual needs to cover specific costs such as transport, books or equipment, and other course costs. The Trust offers two levels of financial support based on household income. The thresholds for determining eligibility to claim are detailed in the eligibility section below.

3. Eligibility

The basic eligibility requirements of the scheme which are applicable to both vulnerable and discretionary bursaries are

- **Age** - students must be over 16 and under 19 at 31 August 2015 . If a student turns 19 during their programme of study they can continue to receive the bursary to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.
- **Residency** – students must meet the residency criteria in the EFA funding regulations for post 16 provision 2015-16. This document sets out the evidence required to confirm eligibility and can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision>

The young person must then also meet the eligibility criteria for the category of bursary they are applying for:

Vulnerable Student Bursary

Students must fall into one of the categories below to be eligible for a vulnerable student bursary

- Young people in care, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Care leavers
- Young people personally in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit
- Disabled young people in receipt of both the Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal independence Payments)

The allocation of these funds is subject to audit so the Trust will require evidence that the application is genuine. The Trust will retain copies of evidence for a period of 6 years. All information will be treated in confidence.

Appropriate evidence includes

- A letter setting out the benefit to which the young person is entitled, confirming that the terms of the benefit allow them to participate in further education.

- 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.

Discretionary Student Bursary

Where a student does not meet the vulnerable student criteria, he or she may still be eligible for some support from the Discretionary Fund. The Trust has set two tiers of support based on household income

- **Tier A** – Students entitled to free school meals and students whose household income is less than £16,190. Where students are applying under the free school meal criteria, the Trust will need to be satisfied that the application is genuine following the standard procedures that are currently in operation for FSM application. *(Students claiming in this category will not normally be eligible to claim bursary funding for meals as they will be entitled to receive a free school meal at school).* Where students are applying under the household income criteria the Trust will require the following evidence:
 - A copy of entitlement to means – tested state benefit or Tax Credit Award Notice confirming household income of less than £16,190.
 - Evidence of total household income (including earned and unearned) of less than £16,190.
- **Tier B** – where there is a surplus of funds after the allocation to students in tier A, students whose household income is less than £25,000, may apply for a lower level of support. 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 £25,000.
 - Evidence of total household income (including earned and unearned) of less than £25,000.

Students will be required to inform the school of any changes in their financial circumstances which may affect their eligibility for bursary funding.

4. Allocation of Funds

Vulnerable Student Bursary

The funding for the vulnerable student bursaries is held centrally by the Student Bursary Support Service. Whenever a new student meeting the criteria is identified the Trust must draw the funding down by completing and submitting a claim form via the SBSS online portal.

<https://studentbursarysupport.education.gov.uk>

Discretionary Bursary

- 5% of the fund will be held back for administration.
- 10% of the fund will be held back for applicants who join later on in the year or whose personal circumstances change. Students applying under Tier A will be assessed individually and awarded a bursary based on their actual financial need, up to a cap of £800 per annum.
- If there is still money in the fund after the allocation of funds to Tier A, students, applying under Tier B will be assessed individually and awarded a bursary based on actual financial need up to a maximum of £400 per annum.

5. Conditions for receipt of student bursaries

Students will be reviewed termly (re: their attendance, timekeeping and general conduct) at pre-set dates throughout the year in accordance with the sixth form code of conduct policy. In order for the ensuing payments to be authorised, students must be compliant with the code of conduct and not be subject to a behaviour contract.

Upon review each term, students will also be expected to have attendance higher than 95% for the term and should have no unauthorised absence. Students in receipt of this grant funding will not usually be eligible or granted any further financial support from the school in help towards these costs.

6. Applications

Application forms can be collected at the Bursary Fund meeting. Alternatively forms will be available from either the finance office at Coombe Girls' or the main office at Coombe Boys' School.

The deadline for receipt of applications is Friday 25th September 2015.

Funding is not guaranteed by receipt of an application form. Each application will be considered on a case by case basis if eligibility criteria have been met and will be subject to the availability of funds.

Completed application forms with suitable evidence of eligibility should be returned to:

Mrs D. Williams in the sixth form office for students at the Clarence Avenue Campus.

Main reception for students at the College Gardens Campus.

Late applications

Late applications will be considered at any point during the year for students whose financial circumstances change, or for new students joining the sixth form.

Awards for regular costs such as travel or meals will only be payable from the time the student became eligible to the end of the course duration.

Payments will commence from the next scheduled instalment unless this would create undue hardship for the student. The Head of Sixth Form must approve any such payment.

7. Payments

Students will be paid in five equal instalments. The initial payment will be made during October half term, with the remaining four payments made during the third week of each subsequent half term (i.e Autumn 2, Spring 1 & 2, Summer 1)

Payments will be subject to the student meeting the required attendance, punctuality and behaviour targets as outlined above and in the Sixth Form Code of Conduct.

Where possible, payments in kind will be used by the school. This will always be the case for curriculum trips/activities paid for by the school.

All payments will be made by BACS transfer into the student's own bank account.

8. Decisions and appeals

The Bursary Fund Manager for each site and the Director of Finance are responsible for deciding who receives awards based on the criteria set out in the policy.

- i. Appeal against the decision not to award a bursary fund grant.

Students have the right to appeal a decision. Students or their parent/guardian will be required to put any appeal in writing within 21 days of receiving confirmation of their application outcome.

The letter must clearly set out the reason for the appeal, which must prove that the student has been wrongly assessed as falling outside of the eligibility criteria, plus any further evidence to support the appeal.

Letters should be sent to the Head of Sixth Form at the site the student is studying at.

The appeal will be considered by a panel of governors. The decision of the panel is final and will be given in writing within 14 days of the decision.

- ii. Appeal against the withdrawal of a payment during the course of the academic year.

The Head of Sixth Form will make the decision as to whether the student meets the attendance and behaviour criteria set out in section 5. If a decision is made to withhold payment, the student will be notified in writing before the next usual payment date.

Appeals against decisions made regarding attendance or behaviour should be made to the Head teacher of the site the student is studying at, in writing, and within 5 working days of the decision letter being received.

A decision regarding the appeal must be reached and communicated within 5 days of the appeal letter being received. The Head teacher's decision is final.

9. Data and Confidentiality

The Trust will treat all information supplied under this policy as confidential and in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy and records management policy.

For audit purposes all information must be retained for a period of 6 years.

10. Audit

The 16-19 Bursary fund is subject to audit so the Trust must retain all documentation relating to each claim, whether it was awarded or not and a brief justification. In particular documentation should include

- Application forms
- Evidence showing the student is eligible
- Evidence of payments received from SBSS (Vulnerable claims)
- Evidence of payments made to the students.
- Receipts for purchases made e.g. bus pass, book receipts.

All documentation must be kept for a period of 6 years.

11. Misuse and Fraud

The Trust has a duty to investigate instances of suspected fraud when a student is applying for bursary funds.

When evidence is found that misleading or fraudulent information has been knowingly submitted by a student or parent, resulting in the student receiving a bursary that they should not have received, the Trust will attempt to recover overpayment from the student.

The matter may also be referred to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their parent or carer facing prosecution.