Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

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POST-16 BURSARY POLICY 2026-27

Post-16 bursaries are funded by the DFE. They are to provide financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education. There are two types of Post-16 bursaries:

1. Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 a year
2. Discretionary bursaries which are awarded to meet individual financial needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, books, educational equipment, and other related costs.

Each student is assessed based on their individual financial need and the bursary is to be used to fund specific items which support a student's study. Flat rate payments to students without consideration of individual financial need cannot be made as the bursary is designed to help students to overcome the individual financial barriers to participation that they face.

Bursaries are, in the first instance, payments in kind; for example, purchasing books or bus passes for students.
. Sixth Forms are not able to make bursary fund payments as regular payments for living costs or as set monthly payments not linked to specific needs.

The bursary fund cannot be used for external services such as mentoring or to support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the student's study programme. T Level students are able to use the Bursary to claim travel costs incurred in completing their work placements.

Students will continue on the bursary as long as they meet the requirements for attendance and behaviour that are set out for them. Payments will be stopped;

1. If students fail to meet these attendance & behaviour targets;
2. If students have been absent for a period of four consecutive weeks or more;
3. When students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

When considering whether to stop payments, the Trust will also consider the impact on attendance of illness, caring responsibilities, and other exceptional circumstances and exceptions to the above criteria will be made if agreed by the Director of Education - Sixth Form.

The Trust reserves the right to ask that any equipment be returned by the student at the end of their period of study. Should a student leave Sixth Form before the completion of their course, then they will be expected to return any equipment or course materials funded by the bursary.

The bursary funds are awarded to the Trust by the government on an annual basis. This is a finite fund, therefore the Trust has placed restrictions on some of the types of requests students can make to ensure the fund can help the maximum number of students in the best way. The fund may not be able to award all students the maximum allocation.

Vulnerable Groups Bursary

Students who meet the criteria, and have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. It may be that a student may be a member of a defined group but may not have a financial need; in this case no payment will be made. If there is a limited financial need then part of the bursary may be allocated to the student.

The defined groups are:

- In care
- Care leavers
- Receiving 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 or partner.
- 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 note that receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means tested benefits paid to families. Students who are 19 or over are not eligible for the vulnerable bursary.

Students need to provide proof that they are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups. Sixth Forms will need to retain a copy of this documentation for their records. This is as follows:

- For students in care or a care leaver - written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority.
- For students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit - a copy of their Income Support or Universal Credit award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student's name.
- For students receiving Disability Living Allowance - a copy of their Universal Credit claim from DWP and evidence of receipt of the Disability Living Allowance.

The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a student participating in a study programme. As this bursary is based on financial need, financial checks will be carried out. Students who are in care will have their bursary allocation finalised in discussion with their allocated social worker.

Students will not receive set payments on a regular basis. Students can claim for financial support as needed as per the guidance set out in this policy. The Sixth Form in the first instance, will source materials etc as required, to allow the students to access their courses. Students can receive reimbursement where prior agreement has been made with the Bursary administrator and where sufficient evidence (receipt, invoice etc.) is provided.

If a regular need is recognised, a student may receive a regular payment to address this specific need only. This will only apply where it is not possible for the Sixth Form to source the support/materials required. Payments will be made at a set frequency, e.g. weekly, monthly.

All payments made to the student must be paid into the student's bank account. Unless, in exceptional circumstances, the student is unable to administer their account. If the student cannot manage their own funds then a named parent/ guardian will do so.

Discretionary Bursary

This type of bursary is to allow students to help overcome individual barriers to participation. This is designed to help with the cost of travel, to buy essential books, equipment or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls or uniform). These are items the student would need to pay for in order to participate in the study programme. This bursary can be used for trips which are directly related to the programme of study and a student can request either the total cost of the trip up to the value of £250 or £250 to contribute towards the cost of the trip, if the overall trip exceeds this amount. The bursary can also be used for costs associated with university/apprenticeship applications such as interview transport costs. Students may use the bursary to pay for travel costs to attend university open days, however this can be for no more than 4 day visits overall.

Although there is no cap for the amount a student can request as part of the discretionary bursary, there is a limit to the amount of money available for schools to issue to students. To ensure fairness in the distribution of the bursary, a nominal cap will be set at £1,200. At this point, the student's bursary allocation will be reviewed before any more payments can be made from it.

Students are eligible for the Discretionary Bursary if their gross household income is below £32,000 or/and if there are other circumstances, such as distance to travel from the institution, the number of dependent children in the household or if a student is a young carer which would affect their ability to fund the costs as listed above. The Director of Education - Sixth Form or Executive Headteacher has the ability to use their discretion to award bursary funds in the case of exceptional circumstances and based on the students' needs.

Reimbursements will be made in accordance with the award of the bursary. Evidence must be provided with the reimbursement claim form. For transport costs, fuel receipts must be provided and a mileage log must be maintained.

Who is eligible?

- Students who have been legally resident in the UK for at least three years.
- In addition, students who are:-
    - Nationals of EU (or EEA) countries who are already living in the UK before UK exit from the EU.
    - Students who are citizens of British Dependent Territories.
    - Students whose passports have been endorsed to show they have right of abode in the UK.
    - Students whose parents have been given leave to remain in the UK as per the DFE funding guidance.
- Any students over 16 but under 19 on 31st August of the previous academic year will be eligible in the following academic year, for example if a student is this age on 31st August 2026 then they will be eligible for the academic year 2026/27.

Students who are aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive the discretionary bursary, if they are continuing on a study programme they began when they were aged 16-18, or have an education health care plan (EHCP).

Evidence required

The evidence that you declare **must** be supported by evidence (photocopies will be accepted) in order for an assessment to be made. No action will be taken with the application until satisfactory evidence has been provided.

The table below shows the evidence that the Trust will need to process an application.

Type of Income	Evidence Required
Annual Salary	P60 for the previous tax year, or week 52 (last week in March) pay slip or month 12 (March) pay slip
Child Tax Credit	**CURRENT** Child Tax Credit Award Notice. Must be for full year and not partial awards (FULL AWARD NOTICE)
Working Tax Credit	**CURRENT** Working Tax Credit Award Notice. Must be for full year and not partial awards (FULL AWARD NOTICE)
Universal Credit	Entitlement / Award letter and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.
Income Support	Entitlement / Award letter and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.
Job Seekers Allowance	Entitlement / Award letter and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.
Employment Support Allowance	Entitlement / Award letter and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.
Carer's Allowance	Entitlement / Award letter and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.
Any other benefit	Entitlement / Award letter and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.
Disability Living Allowance	Entitlement / Award letter and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.
Students in care or care leavers	Written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority.
Targeted Free School Meals	Evidence of Targeted Free School Meal entitlement from Key Stage 4 (can be provided by the School) or confirmation letter of Free School Meal entitlement.
Expanded Free School Meals	Entitlement / Award letter for Universal Credit and the last 3 months bank statements, showing payment received.

Alternatively, you can inform us about your income by sending your latest Tax Credit Award Notice (form TC602) that correctly states your total household income for the tax year.

A Tax Credit Award Notice is sent to you if you receive working tax credit or child tax credit.

(Please provide the total income shown on the inside page of your notice)

At the start of Year 13, students are required to complete a declaration which confirms household income has not changed since the academic year in which it was first applied.

Bursary Restrictions

Under DfE guidance, Sixth Forms are not permitted to use the bursary funding in the following ways:

- Learning support such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.
- Extra-curricular activities or trips, including those abroad, not essential to the student's study programme (this does not apply to the Duke of Edinburgh Award as this is part of a student's study programme and the Bursary will fund 50% or up to £500, of the cost of the expedition).
- Any expenditure not linked to the provision of bursary.
- Bonus payments to reward attendance or achievement.
- Payments to support students' general living costs.
- Making large or lump sum payments to students.
- Bursary funding cannot be used to fund school meals except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Director of Education - Sixth form.

As detailed previously there are some restrictions on which items can be requested via the bursary.

1. IT equipment - students can only request one IT device to be supplied by the school; this will be a Chromebook unless a more specialised device is necessary to support the learner of a specific course of study.
2. Stationery pack - students can pick options from an approved stationery list; this includes a calculator recommended by the Maths department.
3. A camera is available as recommended for A Level Photography.
4. Uniform allowance - if there is a compulsory Sixth Form uniform then students may request up to £250 per academic year. Students may also claim if there is a specific dress requirement for a work placement that is a compulsory part of their course or for specialist clothing required for their course such as overalls. **Students cannot claim for clothing where there is no uniform or requirement for specialist clothing.**
5. Once a student's application is approved a pack of revision books, recommended by subject staff will automatically be purchased to support them with their studies

How to Apply

To apply, students must complete the online application form which will be available on Sixth Form websites. Sixth Form students can apply at any time, with an initial deadline of 30th September. Students are not required to reapply when moving from Year 12 into Year 13. However, students are required to sign a declaration at the start of Year 13 to confirm there has been no change to the household income/circumstances.

Bursary payments cannot be paid into another person's account, except in exceptional circumstances where a student is unable to administer their own account and if the student cannot manage their own funds.

Applications can take up to three weeks to process. Once the application has been approved, students must sign the Bursary Agreement before they can access bursary funds. All requests for items, or reimbursement through the bursary, will be completed via the provided to students.

Bursary applications should be received before the end of term 5. Applications received after this date can be awarded only at the discretion of the Director of Sixth Form. No claims can be made on the bursary after the 10th July in each academic year.

Students need to be aware that giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/ over payment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered.

All information given in the application process will remain confidential.

Care to Learn support

The bursary fund may be used to provide exceptional further help with childcare costs for those young parents in receipt of Care to Learn. In the case of an application for this purpose the Trust will follow the guidance for this as set out by the DfE in their Bursary guidance and the Care to Learn Guidance https://tinyurl.com/3n9be9u6.

Organisation and Appeals

The Bursary Administration team, under the guidance of the Director of Education - Sixth Form, will be responsible for deciding who receives the awards based on the criteria listed in this policy.

The Bursary Fund is given to the Sixth Form every year by the DFE. Once these monies have been allocated, the Sixth Form will not be able to make any further grants until the new academic year.

The Bursary guidance is based on government 16-19 bursary guidance 2026-27. If there are any specific circumstances not covered by the MNSP Bursary policy, this guidance will be used.

Appeals relating to the bursary should be made to the Trust Head of Finance, in writing to the Trust PA headoffice@msnpartnership.com