



DISCOVERY
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy 2026/27

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1. Aims

Discovery Educational Trust (DET) aims to:

- Have clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 Bursary Funds;
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the type of support that is available and the means of applying for it.

2. Guidance

This Policy is based on [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) on the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund for the 2026/27 academic year.

3. Definitions

‘In care’ is defined 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 1989 defines the term ‘looked after child’.

‘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).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Trust Board

The Trust Board (TB) has overall responsibility for approving the DET 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy.

The Director of Finance has the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Policy.

4.2 Head of Sixth Form

The Head of Sixth Form is responsible for ensuring that staff are familiar with the DET 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

4.3 Staff

School staff are responsible for implementing the DET 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy consistently.

The Central Finance Team will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this Policy and its implementation.

4.4 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the Head of Sixth Form of any concerns or queries regarding the DET 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy.

5. How the Trust Uses the Bursary Fund

Support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. See section 6 below for details of the Trust's eligibility criteria.

The fund is intended to support students aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific barriers to participation in order that they can remain in education.

We use the fund to provide students with support to fund:

- Public transport;
- Books;
- Equipment and resources;
- Field trips and other course-related costs;
- The costs of attending university interviews and open days;
- In-house lunch allowance;
- Termly school clothing allowance.

On occasions, books or equipment purchased will be returnable at the end of the study programme.

This list is not exhaustive, and other support may be given at the discretion of the Head of Sixth Form. All support must be in line with the conditions of the 16 to 19 funding allocation.

6. Eligibility Criteria

6.1 Age

To be eligible:

- A student must be aged 16 or over, but be under 19 on 31 August 2026.

Students 19 or over must either:

- Be continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18; or
- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

6.2 Eligible education provision

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assure quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also be either:

- Funded directly by DfE or by DfE via a Local Authority (LA);
- Funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund;
- Publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including Level 3) accredited by Ofqual or on the DfE list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19;
- In a 16 to 19 traineeship programme;
- Non-employed and participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme.

Students are not eligible if:

- They are on an apprenticeship programme;
- Are on any waged training.

Students, who are studying via distance learning, may need infrequent financial help (e.g. travel to exams). If this is the case, the Trust will provide support in-kind (e.g. a travel pass).

6.3 Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the [Advice: funding rules for 16 to 19 provision - GOV.UK](#)

6.4 Asylum Seekers

Those under 18 with an adult relative or partner and those aged 18 and above:

- Are entitled to education;
- Are not entitled to public funds;
- Can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

The Trust 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 LA;
- Are to be treated as 'looked after' children;
- Are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

When these students reach 18, the Trust will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the [upper age limit](#).

6.5 Bursaries for Young People in Defined Vulnerable Groups

Funding for this bursary comes from the Department for Education and is held centrally. The School will make a claim on behalf of students, who meet one of the four criteria below, in addition to the above age and residency criteria, and can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups of **up to** £1,200 per year.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (those who are privately fostered are **not** classed as looked after);
- 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.

We will look at individual cases for these students, based on needs. Students will only receive the amount that they actually need to participate, and not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

The Trust will obtain the following **proof of eligibility** for vulnerable groups:

- For students, who are in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant LA. The evidence could be a letter or an email, but must be clearly from the LA.
- For students in receipt of Universal Credit (UC), the Trust must also see a copy of their UC or IS award notice that clearly states the student's name and that they are entitled to the benefits in their own right - the evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training.

- The evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training.
- For students receiving UC/Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, a copy of their UC claims from DWP (UC claimants should be able to print off details of their award from their online account). Evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment must also be provided.

Students who meet the vulnerable group criteria but have no actual financial need may receive a nil award. The Trust will still record these students in accordance with DfE requirements for Zero Bursary Students.

6.6 Discretionary Bursaries

In assessing an application for a discretionary bursary, the Trust will consider:

- living in a household with an annual income of £41,400 or below before tax and national insurance or, received free school meals in Year 11 and may be eligible now, and have identifiable financial needs;
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the institution;
- The number of dependent children in the student's household;
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help;
- The requirements of their study programme.

To assess household income, the Trust will ask to see:

- Proof of Universal Credit (most recent three months);
- Proof of benefits letters;
- Tax credit award notifications;
- P60s – April 2026;
- Pay slips (most recent three months);
- Bank statements covering a certain period (e.g. the last three months);
- Universal Credit award notices (e.g. the most recent three notices).

In all instances, the checklist in Appendix A should be used when assessing student applications for support.

7. Allocation

All decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary are based on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. These will vary from student to student depending on the above criteria. Once it is established who will be supported, the funds will need to be divided:

- Some funding will be held back for applicants who join later in the year or whose personal circumstances change.
- The allocation to the discretionary bursary students needs to be fair; students that apply will be assessed individually based on their actual financial need.
- If there is still money in the fund after allocation of identified students referred to above, students with higher household incomes may receive financial support. This could be in the

form of payment for specific items required (e.g. textbooks or trip that is necessary for course of study).

- The allocation criteria will reflect the Trust's Equality Policy and the Equality Statement and Objectives.
- Where a student is required to attend a subject-related trip (e.g. Geography field trip), the appropriate amount will be deducted from the allocation.
- The funding for students in Defined Vulnerable Groups is held separately, so does not form part of the allocation set out above. Vulnerable bursary funding of up to £1,200 is available to meet the needs of these young people, but this cannot be automatically claimed. Students must be assessed individually to determine the amount of support they need to participate and only claim and provide funds to meet those needs.
- Up to 5% of the funds will be held back to cover administrative costs

8. Payment

8.1 Process

Payments are made using the following process:

The School will base all decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. These will vary from student to student, depending on, for example, their household income, the distance they need to travel to the institution and the requirements of their study programme. The School will not make bursary fund payments as regular payments for living costs as this is out of scope of the bursary fund.

- The School will use payment in kind wherever possible, e.g. course materials, travel passes and in-house meal allowance. Students will need to itemise their requirements, seek approval from the School prior to any purchase. Where possible, the School will make the purchase on the student's behalf. Where this is not possible, receipts must be provided as evidence.
- Where payments in kind are not possible, the School will make use of BACS transfer for payment directly to student bank accounts.
- Some of the money to cover an individual's curriculum-related activities, such as field trips or special equipment may be held back.

Applications should ideally be submitted by Friday 2 October 2026 to ensure that enough time is allocated to assess the overall level of demands and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. (Please retain any travel receipts for the period of September so that reimbursement can be made). However, as students' circumstances may change, the application process will remain open for the whole school year. Completed applications should be submitted to the Head of Sixth Form/Deputy Head of Year. Application forms are available on Chase High School (CHS) and St. Martin's School (SMS) websites and from respective Heads of Sixth Form.

8.2 Conditions for the Receipt of Bursary Payments

Payments are conditional on students meeting the following conditions in relation to their standards of attendance and behaviour:

- High attendance (93%-100%);
- Adherence to the School's Sixth Form Code of Conduct.

All students are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions.

Students, who fail to meet these conditions, may have their payment withheld.

The Trust will consider the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

The Trust will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of four continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays, or if there is evidence that the student intends to return).

As much as possible, the Trust will avoid sanctioning a student to the extent that their bursary funding had been stopped for a whole term.

The Trust reserves the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

The Trust will consider the impact of such an action on the individual student before taking a final decision to do so.

9. Monitoring Arrangements

The Head of Sixth Form will oversee the operation of the Bursary Fund and establish clear monitoring of its operations through the School management structure.

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Chief Financial Officer. At every review, the Policy will be approved by the TB.

10. Appeals

Students may appeal a bursary decision in writing to the Head of Sixth Form within 10 working days. Appeals will be reviewed by a senior leader not involved in the original decision. A final appeal may be made to the Chief Financial Officer.

Appendix A – 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Checklist

Area of eligibility or process	Item	Completed?
Eligibility: All Bursaries	Student is aged 16–18 on 31 August of the academic year OR is 19+ and eligible as a continuer or has an education, health and care plan (EHCP).	
Eligibility: All Bursaries	Student is enrolled on eligible publicly funded provision.	
Eligibility: All Bursaries	Student meets the residency criteria for post-16 provision.	
Eligibility: All Bursaries	Eligibility evidence has been seen and copies retained.	
Bursary for defined vulnerable groups	Student falls within one of the defined vulnerable groups for example, in receipt of the specified benefits in their own right or in care/care leaver.	
Bursary for defined vulnerable groups	Financial needs assessment carried out to confirm financial need and actual costs they have. No student should automatically receive £1,200.	
Bursary for defined vulnerable groups	Appropriate evidence seen and copies retained to confirm student's eligibility, including the letter to support in care.	
Bursary for defined vulnerable groups	Funding reflects actual participation costs.	
Discretionary bursary	Student meets institution's bursary criteria.	
Discretionary bursary	Evidence of income and overall eligibility obtained, and copies retained.	
Discretionary bursary	Assessment of student's actual financial needs carried out. Block, blanket or flat rate payments are not permitted – the financial support from bursary funds should reflect the actual costs the student has.	
Nature of Support Awarded	Support is for essential participation costs only.	
Nature of Support Awarded	Support excludes living costs, pastoral, learning support and teaching (that a provider is already funded to deliver), flat rate payments and non-essential activities.	
Nature of Support Awarded	Support provided in kind where appropriate (bus pass, meal vouchers, books or equipment purchased on student's behalf).	
Nature of Support Awarded	Receipts or procurement evidence must be retained.	
Nature of Support Awarded	Funding used in conjunction with other streams must be according to the guidance.	
Attendance, Behaviour and Progress (if applicable)	Any conditions you have set are clearly defined, reasonable, and proportionate.	
Attendance, Behaviour and Progress (if applicable)	Any conditions you have set are included in the funding letter.	
Attendance, Behaviour and Progress (if applicable)	Monitoring process to support the conditions in place.	
Attendance, Behaviour and Progress (if applicable)	Evidence retained if support is suspended or withdrawn because conditions have not been met.	
Funding Letter	Funding letter confirms support, conditions, and review points.	
Funding Letter	Funding letter issued and retained.	