



**BIDDULPH
HIGH
SCHOOL**

16-19 BURSARY AND FREE SCHOOL MEAL POLICY FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27



Purpose of the Fund

The purpose of the 16-19 Bursary Fund is to provide **financial support** to help learners overcome the **specific financial barriers to participation** they face so that they can remain in education.

The policy will provide clear, accessible and transparent information to students, parents and staff about how the Bursary Fund and Free School Meals will be administered. Including, how the funds will be used, eligibility criteria and procedures used.

Allocation

The school will receive an annual allocation from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The school cannot subsidise the bursary from other revenue streams.

Scope

Academies must assess the needs of individual learners and not make flat rate payments because the fund is designed to help students overcome individual financial barriers. **'No student should automatically be awarded a set amount of funding without an assessment of the level of needs they have'**.

The 'fund' is intended to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme, it is **not intended to support extra-curricular activities or provide learning support** – services that institutions give to students such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.

Eligibility

There are three types of 16-19 bursaries:

Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries

Students will be entitled to apply for a 'Supportive Student Bursary' of up-to £1,200 which will be awarded following 'an assessment of the types of costs' individual students face. Students are not automatically awarded the full amount. The academy may refuse an application or award a reduced amount because they do not have a financial need, for example because there are no relevant costs or the financial needs are already being met. Defined vulnerable groups are:

- In care
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves, or financially supporting themselves and a dependent living with them; such as a child.
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independent Payments in their own right as well as Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.

Discretionary Bursary

Students will be entitled to apply for a 'Discretionary Bursary' to help them overcome financial barriers to education, this is likely to include but is not an exhaustive or exclusive list;

- Essential books.
- Equipment including specialist clothing and IT equipment.
- Activities that are an essential part of the students' 16-19 study programme.
- Public transport.
- Meals – where eligible.
- University open days and interviews.

Bursary funding does not support the learning support and services that institutions give to students, for example counselling or mentoring, and is not to support general household incomes.

Free School Meals Only

Students whose household income exceeds the School's Discretionary Bursary threshold (£35,000), may still apply for Free Meals in Further Education where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit. A copy of the most recent Universal Credit payment statement must be provided as evidence to support the application.

Free School Meal

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students and this funding forms part of the overall Bursary Fund designed to overcome the financial barriers to participation.

Free meals are provided using the on-site catering facilities for every day that the eligible learner attends their programme of study. This includes examinations, study visits, and work experience placement that the student undertakes as part of their programme of study. When a student is attending an off-site activity the free meal is provided as a packed lunch.

The nominal amount of funding for each meal is £2.98.

Administration

- Applications will be accepted at any time during the academic year.
- The academy will always endeavor to meet student needs at any time of year, but following 30 September the award may be reduced to fit within the funds available.
- The academy must check student eligibility each academic year, which means students may need to apply separately for each academic year.
- The academy can only process applications that provide evidence of eligibility and where copies are retained for audit purposes. Applications will be refused if the required evidence is not provided or copies cannot be retained.
- Bank accounts to which payments are made **must be in the student's name**.

Awards

Eligibility for a bursary does not automatically mean that funding will be given. It is possible that there will be no award or a limited award. This may be because there is no financial need, the need is already being

met or in the case of an in-year application that funds are not available because they are allocated on a first come first served basis.

There must not be blanket or flat rate/fixed rate payments to all students. A discretionary bursary may be larger than a vulnerable group award.

The Bursary award may vary through the academic year if the individual specific need changes. For example, a student may travel further to an industry placement and therefore require additional funds for the journey and meals.

The academy must manage the number and size of awards to keep within their budget. A small emergency fund may also be retained to support students who face exceptional circumstances.

The award is not tied to attendance, achievement or behaviour and therefore can't be used to incentivise students. However, receipt of the award is conditional upon meeting the minimum expected standards of attendance and behaviour. The minimum expected standard of attendance is 95%, and below this minimum the award may be suspended or withdrawn. In considering suspending the award the academy must first consider the student's individual circumstances and the purpose of the award to support attendance. When students are removed from the school roll, they are no longer eligible for the award and this will cease. The Academy should also stop payments following a period of absence of 4 continuous weeks.

Specialist equipment purchased with these funds remains the property of the Academy and should be returned in good condition at the end of the academic year. Other equipment, tools or protective clothing which may be reusable at a later date should be returned in good condition. The Academy will give practical consideration to such factors as hygiene, health and safety and wear and tear.

The ESFA prefers awards to be made 'in-kind rather than cash as far as possible'. Where awards are made as payments, they will be made to the student's bank account, further information on basic bank accounts can be found at the British Bankers' Association (www.bba.org.uk). The funds must only be spent on the support that has been identified as necessary for them to participate in education.

Appeals

Applicants should be aware that the funding available is limited. Biddulph High School will consider all applications received but reserve the right to award funding as appropriate.

Any appeal must be made in writing to Biddulph High School. The grounds of appeal must be stated and any supporting evidence must be provided. After receipt of the appeal the matter will be discussed with the student and the decision upheld or overturned.