

Diss High School

16-19 Bursary Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims

Our school aims to:

- Have clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make clear to parents and students the type of support which is available and the means of applying for it

1.2 Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance>

1.3 How we use the bursary fund

The fund is intended to support students aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific barriers to participation so they can remain in education. Support may be available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See section 3 for details of our eligibility criteria.

There are two elements to bursary funding: the first is for vulnerable students where eligibility is determined by the DfE and consists of a cash payment; eligibility for the second, the Discretionary Bursary fund, is determined by the school and outlined in this policy.

The 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund is a limited fund provided to the school by the DfE. The amount allocated changes annually and the school will prioritise its allocation each year dependent on the amount of funding received, the numbers eligible students and the circumstances of the students.

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

- Transport
- Books including revision aids
- Equipment
- Field trips and other course-related costs
- The costs of attending university interviews and open days
- Any other support they require whilst at Diss High School deemed appropriate by the Bursary Committee.

Wherever practicable we will avoid making financial payments to students to meet their needs. Instead, we will purchase goods & services on their behalf utilising the buying power of the school. This efficient approach to financial management will increase the number of students we are able to assist.

Where items of equipment such as laptops, cameras, textbooks, etc., are provided under this scheme, it is supplied on the strict understanding that the items remain the property of the school at all times and must be returned to the school once the student has completed their studies at Diss High School. Exceptions may be granted for textbooks if the student is continuing to study the subject at university. Again, this approach will allow the school to increase the number of pupils we are able to assist.

1.4 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)

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Governing Board

The governing board has overall responsibility for approving the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, but can delegate this to a committee, an individual governor or the headteacher.

The governing board also has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

In our school, responsibility for approving the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy has been delegated to the Finance Committee as part of the BFR process.

In our school, monitoring the implementation of this policy has been delegated to the headteacher.

As part of the school budget process, in the summer of each year, the Finance Committee will approve the amount of bursary funding to be allocated for the next academic year (the Student Allocation).

2.2 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

The headteacher will determine membership of the Bursary Committee which would normally consist of the Director of Sixth Form and the Business Manager, plus any other staff as appropriate.

2.3 Bursary Committee

The Bursary Committee will consider all applications for bursary funding and allocate the Student Allocation amongst approved students based on factors such as the requirements of their course of study, travel arrangements and family income.

2.4 Other staff

Our staff are responsible for implementing the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently.

The senior leadership team will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.

Once approved, bursary payments will be managed by the Finance Manager with support from the Sixth Form Support Officer as required.

2.5 Parents and Students

Parents and students must provide information at the time of application that is accurate and complete. Any instances of fraud relating to bursary applications will be investigated and overpayment will be recovered.

Parents are expected to notify staff or the headteacher of any concerns or queries regarding the 16 to 19 bursary fund policy.

3. Eligibility Criteria

3.1 Eligibility and Allocation of Funds

There are a number of criteria that will determine whether a student is eligible for bursary funding; these criteria are outlined in sections 3.2 to 3.6 below.

Eligibility, however, does **not** guarantee funding.

Decisions about which eligible students will receive a bursary, how much they will receive and how the bursary will be paid, will be determined annually by the Bursary Committee. Decisions will be based on the amount of funding available, a student's individual circumstances and actual financial needs.

Circumstances will include, for example, household income, whilst need will vary by factors such as the requirements of their study programme, distance they live from school, etc.

Students meeting the eligibility criteria for the vulnerable group bursary will not be awarded funding if they do not have financial needs &/or their financial needs are covered from other sources.

Funding decisions may change each year dependent on levels of funding and the mix of student requirements. Funding from previous years should not be presumed a guide for current or future years.

3.2 Age

To be eligible:

- A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025

Students 19 or over must either:

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

3.3 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 the government or via a local authority
- 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, we will provide support in-kind (e.g. a travel pass).

Diss High School Sixth Form students will usually be eligible through participation in provision funded by the DfE.

3.4 Residency

Students must meet the DfE's residency criteria:

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

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

We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum seekers who have not had asylum refused.

Unaccompanied children:

- Are the responsibility of the local authority
- Are to be treated as 'looked after' children
- Are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups

When these students reach age 18, we 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.

3.5 Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Students who meet one of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the above age and residency criteria, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 per year.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

1. In care (those who are privately fostered are **not** classed as looked after)
2. Care leavers
3. 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; or
4. 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 they actually need to participate and not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

Students eligible for bursaries under this category will be given a pro rata bursary if their study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks.

We 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 local authority. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the 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/confirm 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
- For students in receipt of Universal Credit (UC), a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bills etc.
- For students receiving UC/Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, a copy of their UC claim 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.

3.6 Discretionary bursaries

Students who meet one of the following criteria, in addition to the age and residency criteria, can apply for a discretionary bursary.

1. Students for whom their 11-16 school received pupil premium funding (students who have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years, adopted from care, or have left care),
2. Students currently in receipt of free school meals,
3. Students who feel there are other significant obstacles to their education that are not adequately recognised by the financial criteria alone.

Wherever possible, Diss High School will use its student records to identify students meeting the criteria outlined in [1] and [2] above and invite them to apply for funding. For these students no further evidence will be required. If a student believes they are eligible for funding on these bases but have not received an invitation, they should contact the Sixth Form Office to ask for a review of their eligibility for bursary on the basis of free school meal or pupil premium status.

In addition to the above criteria, in assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income
- Any additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help
- The requirements of the study programme
- Individual circumstances of the student

For those wishing to apply under [3], we will need to assess household income and will ask to see:

- Proof of benefits letters issued within the last 6 months; or
- Tax credit award notifications issued within the last 6 months; or
- P60s for the previous tax year; or
- the most recent three payslips or Universal Credit award notices.

Please note, because this is based on household income, we will need documents from all adult members of the household.

For an application under [4], students should complete an application form detailing their obstacles and provide relevant evidence to support their case.

3.7 Eligibility & Priority for Funding

To help prioritise the allocations of funds, eligibility criteria are used to categorise applicants as being high, medium or low priority for funding.

High priority	Students eligible for a vulnerable group bursary.
Medium priority	Students in receipt of free school meals.
Low priority	Other eligible students

4. Conditions of Funding

There are several conditions attached to bursary funding. Students who fail to meet these conditions may have their payments withheld.

Students must:

- remain a student at Diss High School Sixth Form;
- maintain a good level of attendance with no unauthorised absences;
- meet the standards of behaviour expected of all sixth form students;
- maintain satisfactory levels of progress; and
- complete all coursework/homework assignments promptly and to the best of their ability.

Further, we reserve the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

Students failing to meet these conditions will be required to meet with the Director of Sixth Form to discuss the situation and sanctions.

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

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

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

We will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays, or if there is evidence that the student intends to return).

If bursary funding is withdrawn, the school reserves the right to seek the return of funds provided in advance.

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

5. Applications

Bursaries are allocated for an academic year and applications are invited from July for the start of the new year. In exceptional circumstances, the Bursary Committee will accept applications at any point in the year if necessitated by an unforeseen change in a student's circumstances.

5.1 Normal application process

Applications are invited from July for the next academic year. Application forms are available from the school website and should be returned to the Sixth Form Office together with supporting evidence by close of business on 30th September. Adherence to this deadline will allow the school to allocate funds fairly and equitably amongst eligible students.

5.2 Exceptional Circumstances

We recognise that a student's circumstances may change unexpectedly during the year. In such cases we will accept applications for consideration by the Bursary Committee at its next meeting. Whilst such meetings are usually termly, in extreme circumstances, any member of the committee may call for an extraordinary meeting to consider an urgent request.

5.3 Confidentiality & Data Protection

The school will maintain records necessary to meet its audit requirements in relation to this type of funding. This will include applications, copies of supporting evidence, approvals and payments.

All applications for bursary will be treated confidentially and evidence used to support applications will be kept securely with access only being granted to persons with a specific need. Normally this will be the Bursary Committee members, support staff involved in the running of the scheme and auditors.

All data used to administer the bursary scheme will be processed in line with the school's data protection policy.

6. Fund Allocations

6.1 Determination of the Student Allocation for an academic year

As part of the budget approval process, the governing body will approve a Student Allocation for discretionary bursaries for the academic year. In determining this amount, governors will consider the total student financial support funding for the year, the amount of unspent funds carried forward from previous years, administration costs (maximum 5% of the grant for the year) and the need to retain a contingency for unforeseen circumstances that may require student support.

6.2 Assessing Eligibility & Prioritising Funding

Upon receipt of an application, the Business Manager will assess the evidence provided to confirm eligibility and establish priority for funding. Ineligible applications will be returned to the student via the Sixth Form Admin. Officer.

Acceptance of an application does not guarantee funding.

6.3 Costing Student Needs

Using standard cost data and information supplied on application forms, the Business Manager will prepare cost estimates for each bursary application. This information will be used by the Bursary Committee to allocate funding based on need and in light of available funds.

6.4 Normal Allocations by the Bursary Committee

Starting with high priority students, the committee will allocate the Student Allocation to individual students based on need. As part of this process, the school will draw down available funding from the Student Bursary Support Service.

The cost estimates for medium priority students will then be considered. If sufficient funding is available to meet all the financial needs of all these students, funding will be allocated to individuals in full. If not, the committee will decide which needs can be met and which cannot. In making these difficult decisions the committee will consider factors such as:

- Level of household income
- The number of dependent children in the student's household
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the institution
- Programme of study
- Whether the student has additional needs or responsibilities that may mean they require extra help

Any funding remaining after allocation to high and medium priority students, will be allocated to the low priority group, again taking consideration of an individual's needs & circumstances.

Bursary funding is a limited resource and there is no guarantee whatsoever that we will be able to offer funding to all eligible applicants.

6.5 Allocations following an Exceptional Application

Exceptional applications are those received after the 30th September deadline that have arisen as the result of an unexpected change in student circumstances.

The Bursary Committee will assess the application in light of any unallocated funds from the Student Allocation. If insufficient funds remain, but the need is considered sufficiently high, the Bursary Committee will apply to the governing body for contingency funding.

As with any application, there is no guarantee that we will be able to offer funding to students in these circumstances, but we will give exceptional applications due consideration.

6.6 Outcomes

Once agreed, the Bursary Committee will write to each eligible applicant to advise them of the outcome of their application. If successful, they will be told what expenses will be covered by the bursary and how payment will be made. Wherever possible payment will be made "in-kind" as described in section 1.3.

Any student or parent dissatisfied with the outcome should in the first instance discuss their concerns with the Director of Sixth Form (acting on behalf of the Bursary Committee) and thereafter, if still dissatisfied, follow the procedures outlined in section 8.

7. Payments

7.1 Vulnerable Bursaries

For students qualifying for a vulnerable bursary, payment will be in nine equal monthly instalments. The first payment will be made either on the 1st October or as soon possible after the bursary is approved, whichever is the later. Thereafter, the payments will be made on the 1st of the month.

- Payments can only be made by BACS transfer.
- We will not make payments in cash or by cheque.
- The receiving account must be in the student's name.
- We will not make the payment to a parent or carer except in the exceptional case of a student being unable to administer their own account.
- If a bursary student does not have a suitable bank account, they must open one before payments can begin.

7.2 Payments in Kind

Wherever possible, we will supply the goods and services covered by the discretionary bursary by making in-kind payments to the student. We do this by providing or purchasing the item required on the student's behalf.

Items of equipment, such as laptops, cameras and textbooks, will be provided to students on a loan basis throughout their time at sixth form and must be returned to the school at the end of their studies, or if requested by the school.

7.3 Reimbursements

For some items, it may not be possible for the school to make the purchase on the student's behalf. In this instance, we will make it clear which items are covered by this method of payment at the time the bursary is approved. We will not reimburse students for any expenses except those pre-approved for reimbursement.

For expenses approved for reimbursement, the student must provide a valid VAT receipt to the school. We regret that payment without a valid VAT receipt is not possible. Once an invoice has been received, payment will be made within two working weeks.

- Payments can only be made by BACS transfer.
- We will not make payments in cash or by cheque.
- The receiving account must be in the student's name.
- We will not make the payment to a parent or carer except in the exceptional case of a student being unable to administer their own account.
- If a bursary student does not have a suitable bank account, they must open one before payment can be made.

7.4 Interim Payments – Transport Costs

We process bursary applications as soon after the start of the new school year as we are able. However, due to the rural nature of our school, we recognise that there is one significant up-front cost that can present an obstacle to disadvantaged students continuing education. That is the cost of transport to school.

To assist with this, we will accept applications from high (vulnerable group) and medium (in receipt of free school meals) priority students from mid-June for travel passes for the next academic year. If approved, we will arrange for passes to be purchased before the new year begins.

Any low priority student who purchases their own bus pass and is subsequently granted a discretionary bursary covering travel costs, will be able to reclaim the costs incurred on production of a receipt. Costs will be reimbursed as detailed in section 7.3 above.

8. Appeals and Complaints

Any student or parent dissatisfied with any aspect of the 16-19 Bursary, should follow the school's complaints procedure as published on the school website.

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Business Manager whenever the DfE updates its guidance (usually annually). At every review, the policy will be approved by the Finance Committee on behalf of the governing body.