The Catholic High School Chester

16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

Approved By	Full Governing Board
Category	Finance
Policy Owner	Mrs B. Letissier
Date Approved	14/7/26
Next Review Date	July 2027

1. Aims and Scope

1.1 The 16 to 19 bursary fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

1.2 There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries and this policy refers to both:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
- Discretionary bursaries

1.3 This policy aims to:

- Set out clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make sure that bursary funds are administered appropriately and fairly, with due regard to the Equality Act 2010
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the type of support that is available and how to apply for it
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

2. Guidance

2.1 This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on the 16 to 19 bursary

2.2 This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definitions

3.1 '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)

3.2 'Looked after child' is defined as: a child in the care of a local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the authority in the exercise of any functions for more than 24 hours (section 22 of the Children Act 1989)

3.3 'Care leaver' is defined as:

3.4 A young person aged 16 or 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

3.5 A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 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

4. **Roles and Responsibilities**

4.1 The governing board

The governing board has overall responsibility for

- Approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Ensuring compliance with relevant requirements

4.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Making sure that staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Making sure the policy is being applied consistently
- Setting eligibility criteria for bursary funding and making sure these comply with the Equality Act 2010 – this is delegated to the Director of Sixth Form
- Promoting awareness of the 16 to 19 bursary fund to prospective applicants and their parents/carers – this is delegated to the Director of Sixth form and pastoral team

5. Bursary panel

5.1 The bursary panel is responsible for reviewing applications and supporting evidence in accordance with this policy.

5.2 The panel consists of:

- Director of Sixth Form
- School Business Manager

6. School business manager/bursar/head of finance

6.1 The school business manager is responsible for ensuring that the bursary funding is accounted for accurately.

7. Staff

7.1Our staff are responsible for implementing this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently.

8. Parents/carers

8.1 Parents/carers are also expected to notify staff or the headteacher of:

- Any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Any change in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding

9. Students

9.1 Pupils are responsible for meeting the conditions attached to the receipt of any support from the bursary funding.

10. How we use the bursary fund

10.1 Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See sections 6, 7 and 8 below for details of our eligibility criteria.

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

10.3 There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

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

- Transport
- Books
- Equipment
- Field trips that are essential to the course and other course-related costs
- The costs of attending university interviews and open days
- Specialist clothing
- Emergency meal support

10.5 We will provide support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible. It will not be provided as regular payments for living costs.

11. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

11.1 Please note: the following eligibility criteria will be assessed in addition to the individual student's actual financial needs. This means:

- No student will automatically be awarded an amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have
- Funding provided to each eligible student is based on their actual participation needs (supported by evidence) and not a flat or fixed-rate payment that does not reflect the actual costs they face

12. Age

12.1 To be eligible for either bursary in the 2025 to 2026 academic year, students must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August 2025.

12.2 Students aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary (see section 6.6 below) if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18 years old (19+ continuers)
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

12.3 Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.

12.4 In exceptional circumstances, where students under 16 years old are on a funded 16 to 19 study programme at our school, we may use our discretion to pay bursaries to these younger students. However, if these students are enrolled at another institution that receives public funding for them, they will not be eligible for bursary funding.

12.5 Students aged under 19 enrolled on higher education qualifications are not eligible for support from the 16-19 bursary fund.

13. Eligible education provision

13.1 Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Be funded directly by the DfE, or by the DfE via a local authority
- Be otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is on the DfE's list of qualifications

- Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme are also eligible to receive a bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course.

13.2 Students are not eligible if:

- They are on an apprenticeship programme
- They are participating in any waged training

13.3 Students who are studying via distance learning are not likely to require financial help from the bursary fund. If they do require financial help, we will provide support in kind, such as a travel pass to attend exams. Details of this shall be decided on a case-by-case basis.

14. Residency

14.1 Students must meet the residency criteria in the DfE funding rules for 16 to 19 provision.

15. Asylum seekers

15.1 Accompanied asylum seekers under 18 with an adult relative or partner, and asylum seekers aged 18 and above are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

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

15.3 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are:

- The responsibility of the local authority
- To be treated as 'looked after' children
- Eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, where they have a financial need

15.4 When these students reach 18 years old, we will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary as a student from a defined vulnerable group if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the upper age limit.

16. Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

16.1 Students with a financial need, who meet 1 of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1 to 6.4 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

16.2 The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (N.B. those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after)
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) 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 (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

16.3 UC has replaced IS, as well as other benefits above, for current and future young people aged 16 to 18. However, students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (such as students with an EHC plan) may still receive the legacy benefits listed above.

16.4 Students will be funded to reflect the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the actual participation needs and costs they have.

16.5 Students who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary.

16.6 Students will not receive the bursary if they do not have any actual financial need (for example, because their financial needs are met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs). Should we refuse the application on this basis, we will discuss this with the student and their support worker/parent/carer where applicable.

16.7 Where a bursary is provided, the funds will generally be up to £1,200 per year for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, cases will be looked at individually and the outcome based on a particular student's needs. Students will only receive the amount they actually need to participate and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

16.8 We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to provide more than £1,200 per year if it is necessary, in all the circumstances, for the student to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from the school's discretionary bursary allocation or the school's own funds.

16.9 If a student's study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, this will be considered in the assessment for the bursary amount provided as they may not request as much financial support as those on longer programmes. We will also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding the correct bursary amount to ensure it is appropriate.

16.10 We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a bursary for vulnerable groups if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

17. Discretionary bursaries

17.1 In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1 to 6.4 above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy 1 or more of the following criteria:

- Receipt of free school meals

17.2 Students who do not satisfy any of the criteria listed in this section, but who are able to demonstrate financial hardship arising from other reasons, may still apply for a discretionary bursary.

17.3 In assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the insititution, or the location of a placement
- The number of dependent children in the student's household
- The requirements of their study programme
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help

17.4 There is no set limit for the amount of discretionary bursary that can be awarded to students. We will base all decisions around which students receive a discretionary bursary, and how much bursary they receive, on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

17.5We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a discretionary bursary if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

18. Applications

18.1 Applications should be submitted via email to the finance manager faulkners@christofidelis.org.uk

18.2 Applications should ideally be submitted by 15th September to allow enough time for our school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. This date will be clearly stated on the application form.

18.3 However, we acknowledge that students' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole school year.

18.4 Applicants will be notified in writing (either via email or via letter) whether their application has been successful, together with the maximum amount of funding awarded. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their application for a bursary, they must follow the school's complaints procedure.

18.5 Any enquiries about the application process should be directed to Mrs Faulkner faulkners@christofidelis.org.uk

19. Evidence

19.1 All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence, which we will verify. Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:

- A copy of the UC or IS award notice from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and/or evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP, in the student's name
- Documents such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, birth certificate or utility bills
- Written confirmation of the student's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority

20. Payment process

20.1 Payments are made using the following process:

- Make in-kind payments, such as travel passes, books, equipment or vouchers for meals

20.2 Cash payments will not be made in any circumstances.

21. Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

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

- Attendance in all lessons above 90% (subject to exceptional circumstances)
- Alignment with the sixth-form code of conduct
- Receipts for expenditure and purchases made with the bursary funding are provided – where students are reimbursed for essential purchases from bursary funds

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

21.3 Students who fail to meet these conditions may have their payment withheld, but we will always take students' individual circumstances into consideration. This includes considering the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

21.4 If students have received in-kind support such as equipment or travel cards, they will be asked to return these if they fail to meet the conditions.

21.5 We will stop payments where students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

21.6 We reserve the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

21.7 We will consider the impact of such an action on the individual student before taking a final decision to do so, and any decision will be confirmed to the student in writing.

22. Change in circumstances

22.1 If there are changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers must notify the school without delay.

23. Record keeping and audit

23.1 The school will maintain comprehensive and accurate records relating to the 16 to 19 bursary fund. These records will be kept securely and be readily available for audit purposes. Records will include, but are not limited to:

- Copies of application forms and supporting evidence
- Proof that students meet eligibility criteria
- Records of 'zero bursary' students
- Details of assessment decisions and rationale for awards
- Records of all payments made to students, including dates, value and purpose
- Copies of documents signed by students to give formal agreement to the conditions of payment
- Evidence of student attendance and progress monitoring

23.2 Records will be retained for 6 academic years after the end of the academic year in which the student completed their programme.

24. Unspent funds

24.1 Funding for bursary funding cannot be carried forward by the school for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the DfE by the school using the customer help centre, specifying the amount of funding and the year(s) it relates to, no later than 31 March each year. The DfE will recover all unspent funds.

25. Monitoring arrangements

25.1 This policy will be monitored by Director of Sixth Form.

25.2 This policy will be reviewed by Director of Sixth Form every year. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Full Governing Board.

26. Complaints or Appeals

26.1 Where any student or parent is unhappy with how we have managed their application for bursary funding or the support that has been provided, they are free to make a complaint or appeal as per the schools complaints policy.