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Chatten Free School 16-19 Bursary Policy 2026-2027

1. Introduction

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education. This policy sets out how Chatten Free School administers the fund in accordance with the Department for Education (DfE) 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Guide 2026-2027.

There are two types of bursary available:

- **Bursary for students in defined vulnerable groups**
- **Discretionary bursary**

Bursary funding may be used to support essential participation costs including:

- Travel to and from school
- Essential books and course materials
- Specialist equipment
- Essential clothing or protective clothing required for a study programme

The fund is not intended to provide living cost support, learning support services, pastoral support, counselling, mentoring, or non-essential extracurricular activities.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Students must:

- Be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2026; or
- Be aged 19 or over and continuing a study programme started when aged 16 to 18; or
- Be aged 19 or over and have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan; and
- Meet DfE residency eligibility requirements.

Eligibility alone does not guarantee an award. Chatten Free School will assess both financial circumstances and actual participation costs before approving any bursary application.

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2.1 Residency Criteria

Students must meet the residency requirements set out in the DFE funding rules for 16 to 19 provision 2026-2027.

To be eligible for support from the 16–19 Bursary Fund, students must be eligible to receive Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funded education. In general, students must be ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) and meet the residency and immigration requirements set out by the Department for Education (DfE).

Eligible students include, but are not limited to:

- British citizens
- Irish citizens
- Individuals with settled status in the UK, including eligible EU, EEA and Swiss nationals and their family members.
- British Overseas Territories Citizens
- Individuals with a right of abode in the UK.
- Individuals who have acquired British citizenship through naturalisation or registration.
- Holders of a Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa with permission to reside in the UK.
- Children of eligible Turkish workers who were lawfully resident and employed in the UK before 1 January 2021.

In addition, students in the following categories may be eligible for funding, even where they have not been ordinarily resident in the UK for the preceding three years:

- Individuals granted refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary leave, exceptional leave to enter, or exceptional leave to remain, and their eligible dependants.
- Individuals who have recently obtained settled status, indefinite leave to enter, indefinite leave to remain, right of abode, or British citizenship.
- Individuals granted pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

Students aged 18 or under may also be eligible where they:

- Are accompanying or joining a parent, spouse, civil partner, or other qualifying family member who has lawful immigration status in the UK.
- Are dependants of teachers participating in approved teacher exchange schemes.
- Are British or Irish citizens residing legally in the UK, including those who have recently arrived.
- Are dependants of individuals with permission to work and reside in the UK.
- Are dependants of overseas students whose parent or legal guardian holds a valid student visa.
- Are asylum seekers.
- Have been granted leave under Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the "Dubs Amendment").
- Have been granted Calais Leave to Remain.
- Are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, are in the care of a local authority, or are receiving Section 4 support.

Chatten Free School reserves the right to request evidence of residency, nationality, immigration status, or other relevant documentation to confirm eligibility.

Where a student's circumstances fall outside the categories listed above, applications may be considered on an exceptional basis in accordance with Department for Education guidance. Such cases will be referred to the relevant funding authority for advice where required.

Eligibility for bursary funding is subject to the most current Department for Education and ESFA funding regulations in force at the time of application.

3. Defined Vulnerable Groups Bursary

3.1 Eligible Students

Students may be eligible if they are:

- In care
- A care leaver
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit in their own right
- Receiving both Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP), ***and*** Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in their own right.

3.2 Award Levels

Students Eligible for the Vulnerable Student Bursary but Without Financial Need

A student may meet the eligibility criteria for the Vulnerable Student Bursary but not require financial assistance because their participation costs are already met through other sources or they have no identifiable costs associated with attending their programme of study.

Examples may include, but are not limited to, students who:

- Attend specialist residential provision where all education and participation costs are fully funded
- Are in the care of a Local Authority where educational costs are fully met
- Receive sufficient financial support from a partner or another source that covers their participation costs

In these circumstances, Chatten Free School may decline a bursary application where there is no demonstrated financial need. The purpose of the 16-19 Bursary Fund is to support students who would otherwise face financial barriers to accessing or completing their education. Where participation costs are already covered, additional bursary funding will not normally be awarded.

Where an application is not approved on this basis, the Careers and Community Lead will explain the decision to the student's parent, carer, or support worker.

Applicants should be aware that meeting the eligibility criteria for a Vulnerable Student Bursary does not automatically entitle them to receive financial support. All applications will be subject to an assessment of individual circumstances, financial need, and actual participation costs. Chatten Free School does not guarantee bursary awards based solely on eligibility status, and all bursary funding is awarded at the school's discretion in line with ESFA guidance and available funds.

Awards will not automatically be set at £1,200 and may be lower where the student's identified costs are less than this amount.

Support may be provided through:

- Reimbursement of approved costs
- Purchase of goods or services on the student's behalf
- Direct payments

Payment Summary

Purpose	Dates	Payment
First window	7th September 2026 to 11th November 2026	March 2027
Second window	4th January 2027 to 10th February 2027	May 2027
Third window	17th May 2027 to 30th June 2027	October for academies

3.3 Attendance

Students are expected to maintain 90% attendance should a bursary be awarded. Exceptions may be made where attendance is affected by medical or health needs, at the discretion of the Careers and Community Lead.

Due to the complex needs of pupils attending Chatten Free School, no fixed standards for behaviour or attainment are applied to bursary eligibility.

4. Discretionary Bursary

The discretionary bursary is intended to help students facing financial hardship meet essential costs associated with participation in education.

4.1 Financial Assessment

Chatten Free School will prioritise students with the greatest financial need.

As part of the assessment process, consideration may include:

- Household income
- Household circumstances
- Number of dependants
- Care or childcare commitments
- Actual costs required to participate in education

The school's current household income threshold is **£30,000 net per annum**, although meeting this threshold alone does not guarantee an award. Awards will be based on demonstrated financial need and actual participation costs.

4.3 Eligible Costs

The discretionary bursary may contribute towards:

- Travel costs
- Essential books
- Essential equipment
- Specialist clothing
- Additional meal costs linked to participation in education
- Other essential education-related costs approved by the school.

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4.4 Costs Not Supported

The fund will not normally be used for:

- General living costs
- Rent, household bills or personal expenses
- Counselling or mentoring services
- Learning support provision
- Non-essential trips and activities.

5. Assessment and Awards

Chatten Free School will assess:

- Student eligibility
- Financial circumstances
- Actual participation costs.
- Whether costs represent a genuine barrier to participation.

All awards will be evidence-based and proportionate to need. The school will retain records of assessments and supporting evidence in line with DfE requirements.

The school will not operate automatic or flat-rate bursary awards where costs have not been evidenced.

6. Payments

Support may be provided:

- Through purchase of approved items or services by the school
- By reimbursement following submission of receipts
- By BACS payment to the student

The school reserves the right to determine the most appropriate method of support based on the student's circumstances and identified need.

7. Appeals and Complaints

Students who are dissatisfied with a decision may submit a written appeal to the Careers and Community Lead within 10 working days of the decision.

Complaints about the administration of the scheme will be dealt with through the school's Complaints Procedure.

Policy Review

Policy owner: Careers and Community Lead
Approved by trustees: November 2026
Next review date: September 2027

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