

16–19 Bursary Fund Policy

Academic Year 2026–2027

Policy

The 16–19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education. The bursary fund is intended to help students with their actual costs of participating in education, and bursary decisions are based on students' individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

Funding is provided by the Department for Education (DfE) and administered by The Elms Academy. The Academy carries out a financial assessment of each applicant and administers bursaries in line with the current Department for Education 16–19 Bursary Fund Guidance and this policy.

There are two types of 16–19 bursary:

- Vulnerable Student Bursaries
- Discretionary Bursaries

Vulnerable Student Bursary

Students in one of the Department for Education's defined vulnerable groups may receive support of up to £1,200 per academic year where there is a genuine financial need.

Eligible students include those who are:

- in care;
- care leavers;
- receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves (or themselves and someone dependent upon them);
- receiving Employment and Support Allowance together with Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.

Students are **not automatically entitled** to receive £1,200. Awards are based upon an assessment of actual financial need and participation costs.

Discretionary Bursary

The discretionary bursary is intended to help students overcome financial barriers to participation in education.

Support may be provided towards costs including:

- travel to and from the Academy;

- meals where appropriate;
- essential books for enrolled courses;
- equipment for learning on enrolled courses;
- specialist clothing required to participate in education;
- essential educational visits approved by Sixth Form;
- travel and other approved costs associated with university interviews and open days;
- other approved educational expenses directly related to participation in education.

Awards are based upon each student's individual circumstances, actual financial need and evidenced participation costs, as well as the funding available to the Academy.

Eligibility and Application Process

Students must meet the Department for Education eligibility criteria for the relevant academic year.

Applicants must:

- satisfy the Department for Education age and residency requirements;
- be enrolled on an eligible study programme at The Elms Academy;
- complete the Academy application process;
- provide appropriate evidence of household income and financial circumstances.

The Academy will normally prioritise discretionary bursary applications from households with an annual income of **£30,000 or below**, although exceptional financial circumstances may also be considered.

Successful applicants will receive confirmation of:

- whether their application has been successful;
- the support available;
- any conditions attached to their award.

Where appropriate, the Academy may provide support in kind, purchasing approved items or services directly on behalf of the student rather than making a cash payment.

Students meeting the eligibility criteria for the Vulnerable Student Bursary are not automatically entitled to financial support where there is no identified financial need or where those needs are already met from another source. All applications are treated in the strictest confidence.

Conditions

The bursary is intended to support students in participating fully in education. As such, continued attendance, punctuality and engagement form part of the conditions of receiving discretionary bursary funding.

Attendance

The 16–19 Bursary Fund is intended to support students in participating fully in education. Students receiving a discretionary bursary are therefore expected to maintain high levels of attendance. Attendance will be reviewed before bursary payments are authorised through the MyBursary platform.

Where attendance falls below **100%**, the Academy will apply a proportionate reduction to the value of a bursary payment in accordance with its published bursary procedures.

Where attendance falls **below 95%**, bursary payments will normally be **paused**. This is intended to encourage improved attendance and participation in education. Where attendance subsequently improves, previously paused payments may be released following a review by the Sixth Form.

The Academy recognises that some absences occur due to exceptional circumstances. Medical evidence, safeguarding concerns and other significant factors will always be considered before a final decision is made. The Academy reserves the right to exercise discretion where appropriate.

Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive punctually each day.

A deduction of **£1** will normally be made from the bursary payment for each recorded **late-to-school** mark during the relevant payment period.

Behaviour and Engagement

Students are expected to:

- maintain positive behaviour;
- meet coursework and homework deadlines;
- adhere to the Sixth Form Business Dress expectations;
- engage positively with their studies.

The Academy reserves the right to reduce, pause or withhold discretionary bursary payments where students fail to meet these expectations.

Students absent for four consecutive weeks or more (excluding Academy holidays), or who withdraw from their study programme, may have bursary payments stopped.

Payment Process

From September 2026, discretionary bursary payments will be administered through **MyBursary**. Students will be required to submit requests for approved educational expenses through the MyBursary platform.

The Academy will review each request to ensure that expenditure supports participation in education and complies with Department for Education guidance. Students may be asked to upload receipts, invoices or other supporting evidence before payment is authorised. The Academy reserves the right to refuse requests that do not relate directly to participation in education.

Assessment Criteria

The Academy follows Department for Education guidance when assessing bursary applications.

Awards are based upon:

- household income;
- financial need;
- participation costs;
- course requirements;
- travel requirements;
- individual circumstances;
- available funding.

Awards may therefore vary between students.

Complaints

Any student or parent who is dissatisfied with the handling of a bursary application should follow The Elms Academy Complaints Policy available on the Academy website.

Exceptional Circumstances

The Academy recognises that it is not possible to cover every eventuality within this policy. Students or parents/carers experiencing exceptional financial hardship may apply in writing to the Head of Sixth Form for additional discretionary support. Applications should clearly explain the circumstances and provide appropriate supporting evidence. Decisions will be made by the Bursary Committee and will be dependent upon available funding.