

The Blandford School

16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

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Statement of intent

At The Blandford School, we are committed to closing the attainment gap between students from disadvantaged and more advantaged backgrounds, and ensuring that every young person participates in, and benefits from, a place in 16-19 education and training. The bursary is intended, therefore, to help eligible students with the essential costs of their studies, e.g. important books, equipment and travel costs.

We are dedicated to:

- Distributing 16-19 bursaries via a fair and equal process that is transparent, accountable and easily understood.
- Ensuring that information regarding the application, award and administration of 16-19 bursaries is publicly available via the school website and sixth form administrator.
- Widening access to, and participation in, 16-19 education and training.
- Monitoring and reviewing our policies to ensure effectiveness.
- Setting high targets and objectives to develop a culture of continuous improvement.
- Ensuring adequate resources are available to implement policies, as much as is reasonably practicable.
- Sharing and acquiring best practice through partnerships with neighbouring settings.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- ESFA (2025) '16 to 19 bursary fund guide 2025 to 2026 academic year'
- ESFA (2025) '16 to 19 funding: information for 2025 to 2026'
- Equality Act 2010

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Relationships and Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Financial regulations
- Sixth Form Code of Conduct
- Teaching and Learning Policy

2. The Blandford School's responsibilities

The Blandford School will be responsible for determining the eligibility criteria for students and will set conditions for receiving the bursary, such as regular attendance. Arrangements for applying for bursaries will be straightforward and confidential. The school uses Applicaa for 16-19 bursary applications.

The needs of each student who applies for the bursary will be assessed by The Blandford School and evidence will be obtained to support each application.

Records will be kept by The Blandford School of all assessments and payments. The application process will maintain confidentiality.

The Blandford School will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when setting its criteria and will not discriminate against students because of their protected characteristics.

The Blandford School will ensure it completes the new individualised learner record (ILR) or census fields to provide data on the number of students participating in extended work placements.

3. Raising awareness and take-up of the 16-19 bursary fund

To raise awareness of the bursary, The Blandford School will employ different marketing activities, including the following as appropriate:

- Posting information about the bursary on the school website and in the sixth form booklet
- Distributing information at open evenings for Year 11 students
- Providing further information, such as the application method and details of the bursary, following enrolment for all new entrants to The Blandford School in an email about the bursary at the start of the academic year
- Providing tutors with information to inform discussions between tutors and students
- Working with social workers, who help the most disadvantaged students, to identify those who may be eligible for vulnerable groups
- Sending emails throughout the year to inform students, parents/carers of the financial support available
- Informing parents/carers about the Bursary in the year 12 parents information evening

To identify students who may be eligible for vulnerable group bursaries, The Blandford School will work with the LA, LAC education services and care leaver services to help and encourage students to apply for the bursary in addition to their year 11 school (TBS or alternative school).

In addition, The Blandford School will work with the LA to establish local data-sharing agreements to share information about which students may be eligible and who should be supported to make an application.

The Blandford School will establish whether students were in receipt of the pupil premium funding in Year 11 which may indicate whether they are eligible for a discretionary bursary. The school will proactively approach identified students to see if they require support.

4. Bursary fund statement

A bursary fund statement will be published every July on the school website. The bursary fund statement will outline the following:

- How The Blandford School will use its funding
- The eligibility criteria for the bursary
- Terms and conditions for receiving the bursary, e.g. attendance and behaviour requirements
- The type of support offered through the bursary, e.g. with transport, books and equipment
- Whether the bursary fund contributes to other costs, e.g. attending university open days and interviews
- A statement explaining that the support available to students is from the bursary fund

5. Eligibility

Students who are aged 16 or over and under 19 years old on 31 August before the academic year in question may qualify for bursaries for that academic year.

Students aged 19 or over will be able to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18, or if they have an EHC plan, provided they remain eligible and The Blandford School determines they need the support to continue their participation.

Students aged 19 or over will not be eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

Students will be permitted to apply more than once if their circumstances change. In this case, they will be reassessed, including a one-to-one interview to determine if there are any exceptional circumstances to consider.

Most students who receive a bursary will get a tailored award from the discretionary bursary. Students in need of more support will be permitted to apply for a vulnerable bursary.

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body which assesses quality, e.g. Ofsted. The provision must also fall into one of these groups:

- Funded directly by the ESFA or by the ESFA via an LA
- Otherwise publicly funded and leading up to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by Ofqual or on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14- to 19-year-olds

6. Young offenders

Students convicted or cautioned for a criminal offense, i.e. young offenders, will be able to apply for a bursary if they:

- Are serving a non-custodial sentence.
- Have been released early from a custodial sentence, except on temporary license.
- Have been remanded to a non-secure institution.

Young offenders cannot apply for a bursary if they:

- Are serving a custodial sentence.
- Have been released from a custodial sentence on temporary licence.
- Have been remanded to a secure institution.

As with all bursaries, The Blandford School will provide in-kind support to young offenders rather than cash payments wherever possible.

Discretionary bursaries

The Blandford School will ensure that discretionary funding is allocated to the students who are most in need of financial support. The Blandford School's eligibility criteria for receiving a discretionary bursary will include:

- Students living in a low-income household (household income below £30,000).
- Students who have additional responsibilities, such as being a parent.
- Students who are unable to meet the cost of equipment/resources/educational visits as suggested by their courses

Discretionary bursaries may be awarded for students in low-income households. The Blandford School will use household income, in some way, to help establish the amount of support awarded to a student, if possible.

The amount awarded may be dependent on the amount of income – this may be allocated on different levels.

Students who apply will be assessed individually. This assessment will be documented, and evidence to support the claims will be obtained and retained for auditing purposes.

The Blandford School will not make blanket or flat-rate payments to all students or students in the income bands outlined above without considering the actual needs of each student.

The Blandford School will use in-kind payments over cash payments for discretionary bursaries wherever possible.

The Blandford School will manage the discretionary bursary to keep payments within budget. Where possible, The Blandford School will retain a small emergency fund from its allocation to support students who face exceptional circumstances during the year due to a change in their situation that impacts on their ability to participate in education – evidence of a student's eligibility for emergency funds, the individual assessment and their actual participation costs will be held for audit purposes as for any other bursary award.

In individual cases of severe hardship, the bursary fund will be used where appropriate to provide food or transport support for a student on the days they attend their programme of study. Food or transport support will be provided where The Blandford School believes the student to be in real need, and will not require checks on household income or other evidence-gathering that would usually be required.

Where emergency food or transport support is provided, copies of the following records will be retained for audit purposes:

- The total number of students provided emergency food or transport support
- The number of days this support is given to each student
- The total value of support given to each student along with the rationale for its provision
- Signed confirmation of receipt funding by the student or actual spend receipts

The Blandford School will exercise its discretion in each case as this scheme is not intended to continue on an ongoing basis for any individual student. **This flexibility relates to food support or emergency transport support only.**

7. Vulnerable bursaries

The Blandford School's eligibility criteria for receiving a vulnerable bursary will include students who are:

- LAC (this includes those classed as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child).
- Post LAC.
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves and/or someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or a partner.
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right.

Proof will be required to evidence the above eligibility criteria for the bursary.

Students who are in one or more of these categories will be able to apply for a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,080.

Where a vulnerable student is on a course lasting 30 weeks or more and is participating full-time, they will be eligible to receive up to £1,200; students on study programmes of less than 30 weeks will receive a pro-rata amount. The Blandford School will consider the number of hours involved in eligible students' study programmes when deciding if a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

The Blandford School may pay a student in a vulnerable group more than £1,080 if it believes the student needs extra help to remain in education; the extra payment will be paid from The Blandford School's discretionary bursary allocation. The rationale for such a decision will be included as part of The Blandford School's auditable records.

The Blandford School will only pay students the amount they need to access education, based on individual assessment. Students will not automatically receive £1,080 or a set amount of funding unless this is in line with their actual financial need.

The Blandford School will only submit a funding claim to the SBSS once sufficient evidence has been provided and The Blandford School has confirmed that the student needs financial support to participate.

The institution will be responsible for assessing whether students are eligible to receive a vulnerable bursary.

The institution may decide that, although a student may be eligible for a bursary, as they fall within one or more of the vulnerable groups, the bursary is not required as they do not have any financial need and do not need further support. If financial needs are already met and there are no other costs or they do not require the maximum award, the institution may decide not to allocate a bursary to the student.

Where The Blandford School decides that a student is ineligible for funding in accordance with the above criteria, The Blandford School will explain to the student and/or the student's parents/carers the aim of bursary funding and why it is appropriate to not award any in this instance.

If a student or the student's parents still want to claim a bursary for vulnerable groups, they must inform The Blandford School. The Blandford School will then consider the particular circumstances in each case and assess whether:

- No bursary should be awarded, as the student has no financial needs; or
- A reduced bursary should be awarded, as the level of financial help needed is limited.

The Blandford School will ensure its bursary application form is clear about the possibility of no award or a reduced award.

8. Paying bursary funding to eligible students

The Blandford School will aim to pay all funding in-kind, avoiding cash payment where possible.

Payment in-kind may include, for example, travel passes, vouchers or credits for meals, or required books or equipment.

Where in-kind payments are given to students within vulnerable groups, The Blandford School will explain the value of these payments to the student and how these have been deducted from the total £1,080.

Where payments are made to students, rather than in-kind, the funding will be paid by the method preferred by the student.

Payments will not be paid into another person's bank account unless exceptional circumstances mean that a student is unable to administer their own account. If a student cannot manage their own funds, The Blandford School will consider who will manage the bursary on the student's behalf.

The Blandford School has the right to determine how often payments are made – when doing so, the following will be considered:

- The reason the bursary was awarded
- The student's circumstances
- Local arrangements

The Blandford School has the right to insist that students only spend bursary payments on the support that has been identified as necessary to help them access education, e.g. to pay for travel costs.

The Blandford School will adhere to good practice guidelines to make regular payments to students on a weekly basis for regular expenditure such as transport to school.

Students should ensure that receipts and travel tickets are retained and handed in at the end of each week for prompt payment.

All payments must be claimed within four weeks from the date on the receipts.

The Blandford School will not pay bursaries to students in large or lump sums.

In order to decide how best to use individual students' bursary funding, The Blandford School will employ the following procedures:

- Every student who qualifies for a bursary is offered an interview with a member of the Sixth Form tutor team, Head of year, Sixth Form Administrator or Head of Sixth Form to decide the best way to allocate their support
- Priority areas are addressed first, including travel to The Blandford School, equipment costs and support with studies
- Students are usually allocated a higher amount of funding at the beginning of their course to address the priority areas
- A percentage of the funding is kept back as a hardship fund to respond to any emergencies that may arise during the year – the total amount held is discussed with the student during the initial interview

If students or their parents have any queries about payments, they should contact the Head of Sixth Form on vmoore@blandfordschool.org.uk or 01258 451121 ext 236.

The Blandford School may use up to 5 percent of its allocation from the ESFA for administrative costs.

9. Conditions for receiving bursary funding

Receipt of a vulnerable or discretionary bursary will be conditional on the student meeting the agreed standards set by the institution. These are outlined in the 16-19 Bursary statement.

The conditions of payment will be clear and accessible to students, as well as being thoroughly explained as part of the induction process.

Evidence that the student has seen and agreed to the conditions will be kept for audit, such as an agreement signed by the student, in accordance with the '[Student declarations](#)' section.

Students in receipt of bursaries must have 96% attendance or above. Consideration will be given to the impact on attendance that might be caused by caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

In line with The Blandford School's Sixth Form Code of Conduct students that are absent due to appointments will be expected to present evidence of the appointment and complete a 'pink slip'.

Vacation breaks outside timetabled school holiday times will not be permitted.

Students in receipt of bursaries will be expected to abide by the Relationship and Behaviour Policy and the Sixth Form Code of Conduct of The Blandford School.

Where there are concerns regarding a student's attendance or behaviour, The Blandford School will discuss the issue with the student and consider individual exceptional circumstances before withholding any payments. In all cases, sanctioning will not occur to the extent a student's ability to attend education is undermined.

The Blandford School will ensure that all parents and students are aware of the possible impact that attendance may have on payments, outlined in the application form.

The Blandford School will stop payments where a student is not meeting the agreed standards; however, individual circumstances will be considered before doing so.

Where a student withdraws themselves from a study programme, payments will be stopped.

Money may be taken back from students if it has not been spent for the reasons it was awarded to them. Before doing so, The Blandford School will always consider the impact of this on the student.

The Blandford School request that students return any books and equipment purchased for them through the bursary, such as a laptop, at the end of their study programme for use by other students. This will be clearly communicated to students and their parents/carers upon confirming eligibility for the bursary.

The Blandford School will require receipts for expenditure, where appropriate, to confirm that funding is being used for the reason it was awarded. For standard weekly costs, e.g. travel, receipts should be handed to the finance office at the end of each week. For one-off or infrequent costs, receipts will always be collected.

The Blandford School will highlight to students and parents the impact of receipt of the 16-19 bursary fund on other benefits. This includes information that:

- Receipt of bursary funding will not impact the receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, e.g. Income Support.
- Receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Employment Support Allowance will mean parents can no longer receive certain benefits for that child, e.g. Child Benefit.

10. Recycling bursaries

The Blandford School will accrue some unused funding for bursaries for vulnerable groups during the academic year, e.g. if a student leaves early after only receiving part of their bursary, or if the full amount was not paid as the student did not meet the agreed conditions (until 30 April 2026).

Where The Blandford School has accrued funds as specified above, it will use these funds for another student, rather than claiming for the full amount.

If The Blandford School has sufficient funds to cover the costs of a full bursary, it will submit a funding claim showing a value of zero to the SBSS and use the amount to fund the new student.

If The Blandford School decides that a student is in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups, but does not have any actual financial need, it will submit a funding claim showing a zero amount.

The Blandford School will be able to add any funding for bursaries for vulnerable groups it has claimed, but no longer needs, for eligible students for discretionary bursaries (from 1 May

2026). Funds will be allocated in this way on a case-by-case basis after assessing students' needs.

The Blandford School will consider carrying forward any unspent funds to the next academic year – any carried funds will only be used to support students in line with this policy, and will not be added to general funds. Unspent funds carried forward will be used before using The Blandford School's new academic year allocation.

If The Blandford School has no other students who are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups and funds have been claimed in error, it will contact the ESFA and arrange to return the funds.

The bursary fund will not be carried forward for more than one year. Unspent funds will be reported via the Gov customer support centre (link found in the bursary fund guide) no later than 31 March each year.

11. Student declarations

Students and/or their parents will sign a declaration when they apply for either a vulnerable or discretionary bursary, confirming that any evidence given in support of the application is correct.

By signing the declaration, the student and their parents are agreeing to all the conditions and eligibility criteria.

The Blandford School will retain copies of the declaration and supporting documentation for six years – this includes:

For vulnerable groups:

- Evidence showing that the student is eligible, in line with this policy.
- A copy of the student's individual assessment of actual financial need, including a breakdown of the calculation that has determined the amount required.
- Receipts for purchases or in-kind support provided to the student, e.g. bus pass, lunch receipts or book receipts.
- Evidence to support the value of any cash payments made to the student.
- Attendance evidence to support payments where applicable.

For discretionary bursaries:

- Evidence used to assess eligibility and household income, e.g. P60's, self-employment accounts, wage slips, a letter from DWP and copies of online statements for UC.
- A copy of the student's individual assessment of actual financial need, including a breakdown of the calculation that has determined the amount required.
- Receipts for purchases made or in-kind support provided, e.g. bus pass or book receipts.
- Evidence to support the value of any cash payments made to the student.
- Attendance evidence to support payments where applicable.

All data will be handled confidentially and stored securely in line with the Data Protection Policy.

12. Managing applications

The Blandford School will use its own application form for the bursary fund using the Applicaa platform.

The application form will capture all the relevant information needed to assess the application in line with this policy, including:

- Household income.
- The student's actual financial needs to support their participation.
- Specific deadline dates.
- The student's on-line signature indicating they have seen and agreed to the terms and conditions of the funding and that all information provided is accurate.

Applications for the 16-19 bursary are able to be submitted at any time during the academic year.

All applications for the 16-19 bursary will be submitted by 30 September of each year wherever possible, to allow The Blandford School to correctly and fairly assess overall demand and distribute discretionary awards. The Blandford School will not, however, implement a cut-off date for applications, in recognition that some needs may arise throughout the academic year.

The date for applications to be submitted will be outlined in the bursary fund statement, the bursary application form and any marketing materials.

Application forms and marketing materials will outline that students who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to receive them, e.g. if they do not have any financial needs or these needs are covered by alternative means.

13. Quality assurance

The Blandford School will use the ESFA's '[16 to 19 Bursary Fund Checklist](#)' to confirm which documents have been provided for each student, as outlined in the '[Student declarations](#)' section – these relate to the following:

- The application process
- The decision to award the specified amount of bursary
- The funds that have been issued to the student

The Blandford School will maintain written records of the following:

- The number of applications received
- The value of all bursaries awarded
- The purpose of all bursaries awarded
- Which applications qualified for the bursary and which did not
- Brief descriptions of the institution's justification for any decision to award a bursary or not

The Blandford School will retain copies of any documents the student has signed to give formal agreement to their conditions for payment, as well as any others mentioned in this section, for six years.

14. Auditing, assurance and fraud

The Blandford School will be responsible for investigating any suspected instances of fraud relating to bursary fund applications.

The Blandford School will ensure that appropriate processes are in place to record bursary applications and expenditure at student level. This will include:

- A breakdown of the value, including the purpose, type of cost and whether paid or not.
- A brief justification for the decision.

The Blandford School will ensure that it can clearly evidence the following:

- The application process
- How students were assessed as eligible
- How the decision has been made to award the specific amount of bursary based on financial needs
- The funds that have been issued to each student

Copies of documents signed by students to give formal agreement to their conditions for payment will be retained.

Students and their families will be informed that providing false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect payments or overpayment may result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

If evidence comes to light that supplied information is misleading or fraudulent, The Blandford School will stop any further payments and will attempt to recover any payments already provided to the student.

Where significant fraud is identified, The Blandford School will report this to the ESFA. Significant fraud involves one or more of the following:

- The amount of money is in excess of £1,200
- The particulars of the fraud are novel, unusual, systematic or complex
- There is likely to be great public interest due to the nature of the fraud or the people involved

15. Conditions for using the bursary

The bursary fund will not be used by The Blandford School for any reasons which would give it a competitive advantage over other settings, such as:

- Fees for access to facilities in The Blandford School.
- Block subsidy of the canteen.
- Block subsidy of transport.
- Block provision of equipment, material or books.

- Bonus payments to reward attendance or achievement.
- Payments to support students' general living costs.

The bursary will not be used as a way of incentivising attendance or as a marketing tool to encourage students to this this setting over another.

Block payments to students for attendance, irrespective of their actual financial need, will not be paid.

The bursary fund will only be used for supporting students who have a genuine financial difficulty which might prevent them from continuing in education, rather than acting as an incentive for attendance.

16. Complaints and appeals

All complaints and appeals must be made in writing in accordance with the Complaints Procedures Policy.

If the complaint or appeal concerns operational processes or customer service for a vulnerable bursary funding claim, the SBSS will deal with the case. If the case is not resolved following this, it will be passed to ESFA.

The Blandford School will act as a first point of contact for students who have complaints and will support students as much as possible throughout the complaints procedure.

Complaints made regarding The Blandford School and The Blandford School's provision of support will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out in the Complaints Procedures Policy.

17. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Headteacher. The next scheduled review date is July 2026.

The Blandford School will ensure that this policy is implemented correctly and appropriately at all times.

The Blandford School will communicate any changes to this policy to all staff and relevant stakeholders.