Date of next review	June 2027
Review cycle	Annual
Policy control sheet updated	Yes
Type of policy	Non statutory
Policy owner	Finance & Business Director
Location of policy	Denefield website

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Background

The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation so they can remain in post-16 education. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) allocates funding to schools for this purpose. Typically, bursaries are used to help with costs of travel, to buy essential books, clothing and equipment, and for course-related field trips. Bursaries are not intended to support non-education related costs, general household incomes, extra-curricular activities where these are not related to the students' study programme, or provide learning support such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring. No student can be automatically awarded a bursary without an individual assessment of the level of need they have.

This policy sets out how Denefield will administer the 16-19 Bursary Fund in 2026-27. The Finance and Business Director with the Assistant Head in charge of KS5 is responsible for administering the fund.

Bursaries available

There are two types of bursaries for 16 to 19 year olds:

- **Vulnerable bursary**, of up to £1,200 per year, for students in one of the vulnerable groups defined by the Department for Education (see below under 'Vulnerable bursary eligibility').
- **Discretionary bursary** awarded to students who meet the eligibility criteria set by Denefield in this policy.

The amount awarded for bursaries is based on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

Eligibility

To receive a vulnerable or discretionary bursary students must:

- be aged over 16 and under 19 at 31 August 2026. Students aged 19 are only eligible if they are continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to18 or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- be in state-funded education
- meet the residency criteria in ESFA funding regulations for post-16 provision

If a student turns 19 during their programme of study, they can continue to receive the bursary until the end of the academic year in which they turn 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.

Vulnerable bursary

To receive a vulnerable bursary, students must be in one of the defined vulnerable groups **and** have a financial need. The vulnerable groups include students who are:

- in care
- a care leaver
- receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves

- 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.

Discretionary bursary

To receive a discretionary bursary, students must be facing financial barriers to participation and need help to stay in education. Eligibility criteria are designed to help those most in need of financial support. Students must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- show evidence of financial need
- students whose families are in receipt of Universal credit or Income Support
- was eligible for free school meals in Year 11
- total household income is below £24,000 a year
- is a young parent or young carer (if not eligible for a vulnerable bursary)

In exceptional circumstances and at the school's discretion, applications may be considered from students facing financial hardship but who fall outside of the above criteria.

Qualifying condition requirements

Eligible students will need to complete a qualifying learning period of six weeks before they are able to receive bursary payments. However, any eligible student can make an application ahead of the six week qualifying period and, in a case of extreme hardship, consideration will also be given for payment in advance of the six week period.

All students in receipt of a bursary must meet termly punctuality and attendance targets and must meet the school's expectations with regard to conduct and quality of work submitted in order to ensure continued support. Students will be expected to sign a declaration confirming their agreement to these conditions. Denefield reserves the right to withdraw or suspend bursary payments if these expectations are not met. Giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may also result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered.

Applications

All applications will be kept confidential and retained by the school until the student leaves.

All applications to access the 16-19 Bursary Fund must be made using the Denefield 16-19 Bursary application form (attached at **Appendix 1** and available on the Denefield website). Applications must be supported by appropriate evidence of financial hardship and need. Examples of acceptable supporting evidence is listed at **Appendix 2.** If a student has previously provided evidence of bursary fund eligibility since starting in the sixth form, no further checks of eligibility will be carried out as long as the student is able to confirm (hard copy or electronic) that their household circumstances have not changed.

Applicants will be expected to specify the individual items for which they are seeking financial support.

Applications should be submitted in full **by 15 November 2026**. Applications made after this date will be considered provided sufficient funds are available. A small amount of funding will be held back for applications received after 15 November for applicants who join later in the year or whose circumstances change. However, once the 16-19 Bursary Fund has been allocated, it will not be possible to consider further applications.

Application assistance will be provided to students who are unable to make an application due to a level of learning difficulty and/or disability and/or lack of engagement from parent/carer to provide appropriate supporting evidence.

All applications for a bursary will be assessed in confidence by a 16-19 Bursary Application Panel, consisting of the Finance and Business Director and the Head of Sixth Form. Students will be notified by letter of the outcome of their application within four weeks of the submission deadline.

Students who meet the criteria for either a vulnerable or discretionary bursary are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they do not have financial needs and/or their financial needs are covered from other sources.

Appeals

If any student or their parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of their application, they should write to the Headteacher outlining their reasons why. The Headteacher will convene a 16-19 Bursary Appeals Panel, consisting of the Headteacher and a Trustee.

The Panel will consider and respond to appeals within three weeks of receipt. If the appeal is upheld or partly upheld it will be referred back to the 16-19 Bursary Application Panel with recommendations. If the appeal is not upheld the appealing party will be signposted to the School's Complaint Procedure.

Payments

The school will base all decisions about how much bursary they receive on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. Amounts may vary from student to student, depending on, for example, their household income, the distance they need to travel to Denefield, and the specific requirements of their study programme. Denefield will not make bursary fund payments for living costs as this is out of scope of the bursary fund.

Bursaries may be paid as a cash amount (by BACS transfer to the student's personal bank account), or in-kind. Bursary cash payments will only be made as a reimbursement of expenses following submission of a bursary claim form **Appendix 3** supported by receipts evidencing the expenses incurred.

Instead of cash payments, students may also receive payments-in-kind where Denefield purchase relevant items such as course materials and equipment on behalf of the student.

Change in a student's financial circumstances

Any student in receipt of a 16-19 Bursary has a duty to inform Denefield if their financial circumstances or those of their parent/carer change. This could result in any remaining bursary payments being withdrawn.

Student transfers and withdrawals

Where a student in receipt of a 16-19 Bursary transfers mid-year either in to the school from another education/training provider mid-year, or out of the school to another education/training provider mid-year, the school will liaise with that provider to ensure continuity of bursary payments to enable the student to complete their learning.

Where a student in receipt of a 16-19 Bursary withdraws from the school, and does not transfer to another education/training provider, bursary payments made prior to the date of withdrawal will not be recovered but any scheduled payments to be made after the date of withdrawal will not be made.

Further information

DfE 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2026 to 2027

More information about income support, Universal Credit, and Employment and Support Allowance, and Personal Independence Payments can be found at:

- https://www.gov.uk/income-support
- https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit
- https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance
- https://www.gov.uk/pip

Details of West Berkshire Council's criteria for Free School Meals can be found at:

- https://citizen.westberks.gov.uk/article/36469/Apply-for-Free-School-Meals

Information on travel to School:

- Subsidised transport for 16-19 year olds

Appendix 1

16-19 Bursary fund application form 2026-27

All information you provide will be strictly confidential and retained until you leave the school.

Surname:		**First Name:**
Address:		
Email:		**Postcode:**
Age:		**Year group:**
What subjects are you studying?		

Section 1: Bursary eligibility
A 16-19 bursary is paid to help you overcome financial barriers that may prevent you from participating in education. If you are awarded a bursary, you must meet the required standards for attendance and behaviour. To be eligible for a bursary in 2026-27 you must: • meet the Education and Skills Funding Agency's UK residency criteria (Post 16 Funding Regulations 2026-27, para 38-41) • be aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31 August 2025, or be aged 19 or over and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) • be in state-funded education provision

Do you have the right of abode in the UK and been resident here for the last three years?	**Yes**		**No**	

Section 2: Vulnerable bursary criteria				
A vulnerable bursary is worth up to £1,200 per year depending on individual needs. You may be entitled to receive a vulnerable bursary if you are in one of the defined vulnerable groups. Please provide appropriate evidence for each relevant category. Examples of suitable evidence are provided at the end of this form.				
Are you in local authority care or recently left care?	**Yes**		**No**	
Are you an unaccompanied asylum seeker?	**Yes**		**No**	
Are you receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because you are financially supporting yourself or someone who is dependent on you and living with you (such as a child or partner)	**Yes**		**No**	
Are you receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments in your own name **and** either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit?	**Yes**		**No**	

Section 3: Discretionary bursary criteria				
The amount of a discretionary bursary is based on your specific needs and may vary from person to person. Discretionary bursaries are subject to availability of funds and may be given in kind rather than as a cash payment. To be considered for a discretionary bursary, you must answer 'yes' to at least one of the following criteria and provide supporting evidence. Examples of suitable evidence are provided at the end of this form. If you received a bursary in 2025/26 and your household circumstances have not changed, you do not need to provide additional evidence. **Applications may be considered from students facing financial hardship but who do not meet the discretionary bursary eligibility criteria**.				
Did you receive a 16-19 bursary in 2025/26? *If 'yes', go to next question, if 'no' go to Section 3A*	**Yes**		**No**	
Have your household circumstances changed since you last applied for a bursary? *If 'yes', go to Section 3A , otherwise go to Section 4*	**Yes**		**No**	

Section 3A: Evidence of financial hardship				
Are you currently receiving free school meals or were entitled to receive them in Year 11 or Year 12?	**Yes**		**No**	
Are you a young parent or young carer?	**Yes**		**No**	
What was the combined total annual income of all household members in the year ending 5 April 2026? Please provide evidence.	**£**			
Please provide below any additional information you would like to be considered as part of your application:				

Students will normally be eligible for bursaries where total annual household income is below £24,000. Please indicate what evidence of household income you have submitted in support of your application. If you do not provide evidence we cannot process your application.					
P60 (for all earners in the household) for 2025-2026		Tax return for 2025-2026 with evidence of earnings		Salary slips (3 most recent) for all earners	
Income Support (IS) /Universal Credit award letter (UC)		Tax credit award notice confirming household income		Copy of entitlement to means-tested state benefit	
3 most recent monthly award statements for IS / UC		3 most recent monthly bank statements		Other (*please specify*)	
Other (*please specify*)		Other (*please specify*)		Other (*please specify*)	

Section 4: Financial assistance requested

The amount of financial assistance you receive is based on your individual circumstances and needs. **You must provide details of the items you need financial assistance for and the actual or estimated cost**.

Please be aware that bursary funding cannot be used for learning support provided by external individuals or institutions (eg. counselling or tutoring), general household expenses, or activities which are not essential to students' learning

Category	***Description of needs***	**Cost £**
Travel costs (eg bus pass)		
Specialist clothing linked to your courses		
Equipment and materials		
Text books		
IT equipment		
Travel to university / job interviews and open days		
Other:		
Other:		

Bursary applications will be assessed by a 16-19 Bursary Application Panel consisting of the Finance and Business Director and the Assistant Head in charge of Sixth Form. Students will be notified of the outcome within four weeks of the application deadline.

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Section 5: Bank details

Bursary awards will normally be made as a reimbursement of expenses following submission of receipts evidencing the expenses incurred. Payments will be by BACS transfer to a personal bank account **in the name of the student**. Bursary awards may also be made in kind.

Bank account details

Account name:

Sort code: ☐☐ - ☐☐ - ☐☐

Account number: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Section 6: Student Declaration

- I declare that the information on this form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I am fully aware that giving false information that leads to incorrect / overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. This may also result in me or my family facing prosecution.
- I have submitted appropriate supporting evidence and understand that if I refuse to provide information which may be relevant to my claim, the application will not be accepted.
- I understand that monies I receive under the bursary scheme will only be paid on condition of meeting termly punctuality and attendance targets and the school's expectations with regard to conduct and quality of work. Failure to meet these targets and expectations may result in the withdrawal of bursary payments.
- I will notify Denefield of any changes in my financial or personal circumstances that may affect my claim for a bursary.
- I will notify Denefield immediately of any changes to my bank/building society details.
- I understand that monies I receive under the bursary scheme have been awarded to allow me to continue in education and should only be spent on the items listed in the award letter. I understand that if I leave school all financial support will stop.
- I understand that I do not have an automatic entitlement to bursary payments, and all payments are based on the information I have provided.
- I understand I have the right to appeal if I disagree with the outcome of my bursary application. This appeal should be made to the school in writing, but if I feel I have not been treated fairly, I can follow the complaints procedure.
- I understand that a new application must be completed for each year of study.

I confirm that:

- **the information I have given in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge**
- **I have read the 'Denefield 16-19 Bursary Fund policy' available on the school website**
- **I agree to abide by the conditions of this application.**

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Signature:	**Date:**
Name (block capitals):	
Year group and tutor group:	

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Name of claimant:					
Date received:					
Approved:	Yes		No		Date approved:
Amount approved:	£		BACS payment / in kind?		
Date Confirmation letter sent:					

Appendix 2
Examples of supporting evidence for 16-19 Bursary Fund Application

The following documents may be used as evidence to support your application.

Vulnerable bursary

Eligibility criteria	Evidence
In care or a care leaver	Written confirmation of the student's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority Evidence from School records
Students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit (UC)	Income Support or UC award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student's name or confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right. For students in receipt of UC, also a document such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, or a birth certificate of a child of the bursary applicant, utility bills etc.
Students in receipt UC/Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments	UC claim from DWP. Evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP must also be provided

Discretionary bursary

Eligibility criteria	Evidence
Entitlement to Free School Meals	Confirmation from the Local Authority of entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM)
Household income (Household income can be used in conjunction with other factors, such as distance to travel to Denefield and the number of dependent children in the household, to help establish actual need).	• Entitlement to means-tested state benefits such as: • Tax Credit Award Notice confirming household income of less than £24,000 • 3 most recent monthly award statements for Universal Credit UC showing 'take-home pay' **and** amount of UC after deduction (monthly total is the sum of these two amounts) • Income Support award statements • Other benefit award statements • P60 form for year ending 31 March 2026 showing parental annual earnings • Official tax return for year ending 31 March 2026 showing evidence of earnings • Monthly salary slips of all household earners (3 most recent months) • Monthly bank statements of household earners (3 most recent months
Young parent or young carer status	Confirmation letter / email

Appendix 3

16-19 BURSARY CLAIM FORM

Name:	
Address	**Date:**
Post Code	**Tutor Group:**

I claim reimbursement for the sum of £ for the expenses detailed below.

I have attached all receipts or proof of purchase relevant to my claim. I understand that payments may be withheld if they are not supported by appropriate receipts.

I confirm that these expenses are necessary for me to pursue my studies at Denefield.

Signed …… Date……

Details of expenses claimed	£	p

Total expenses claimed		

Approved payments will be made to the bank account on your bursary application form. If you have changed your bank account, please provide your new bank details here.

Changes to bank account:

Account name:

Account no: Sort Code:

Office use:

Received: FBD:

Paid by BACS: Date paid:

Please submit this form, together with receipts, to Mrs J Levey, Welfare Manager Sixth Form, or directly to the Finance Office finance@denefield.org.uk