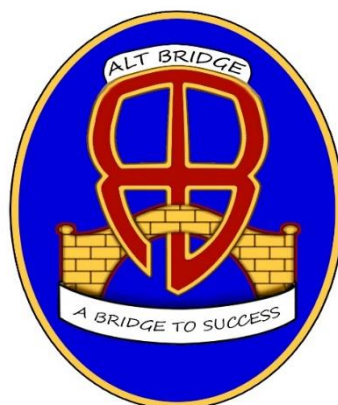


Alt Bridge School



16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

<i>Reviewed by:</i>	K.Dallas	Date: 10.11.25
<i>Approved by:</i>	Full Governors	Date: 12.03.26

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Statement of intent

At Alt Bridge 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:

- DFE '16 to 19 bursary fund guide 2025 to 2026 academic year'
- DFE '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 and Absence Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy

2. The setting's responsibilities

The setting will be responsible for setting eligibility criteria for students at the institution and will set conditions for receiving the bursary, such as regular attendance. Arrangements for applying for bursaries will be straightforward and confidential.

The needs of each student who applies for the bursary will be assessed by the setting and evidence will be obtained to support each application. The setting will claim vulnerable bursaries from the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) for each eligible student.

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

The setting will make this policy available early enough for students to be able to use the information when deciding which post-16 setting to attend.

The setting 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 setting will inform the DFE of the total amount of any unspent funds (not previously reported) from any year up to and including the 2024/2025 academic year, by completing the DFE [online enquiry form](#) no later than 31 March each year.

The setting 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. 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 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 setting determines they need the support to continue their participation.

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

The setting will only pay bursaries to students aged 16 or over, unless in exceptional circumstances, e.g. where a student is following an accelerated study programme. The setting will use its discretion to decide whether a student under the age of 16 is eligible – this is explained further in the '[Discretionary bursaries](#)' section.

Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are considered to be employed rather than in education – as such, they will not be eligible for the bursary.

Non-employed students aged 16-19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme will be eligible to receive the bursary in the same way as any other student.

Students on distance learning provision will not likely need help from the bursary, but in instances where they require financial help, the setting will provide support in-kind, e.g. a temporary travel pass to attend exams.

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

4. Discretionary bursaries

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

- Students who are completing a high-cost course (over £2,000) in which specialist equipment and clothes are required, including industry placements.
- Students living in a low-income household.
- Students who are from a single parent family or have one or more dependent siblings in their family.

- Students who have additional responsibilities, such as being a young carer or parent.

Discretionary bursaries may be awarded for students in low-income households or living in areas of high deprivation. The setting will use IDACI banding; a DFE funding formula, to measure the level of deprivation experienced by students, to help establish the amount of support awarded to a student, if possible.

The amount awarded will be dependent on the IDACI score range and will be allocated on different levels.

The setting will make applications using IDACI on behalf of all students living in areas of high deprivation. This assessment will be documented, and evidence to support the claims will be obtained and retained for auditing purposes.

An information letter will be sent home to parents and carers annually.

The setting will not make blanket or flat-rate payments to all students without considering the actual needs of each student.

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

The setting will manage the discretionary bursary to keep payments within budget. Where possible, the setting 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 support for a student on the days they attend their programme of study. Food support will be provided where the setting 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 food support is provided, copies of the following records will be retained for audit purposes:

- The total number of students provided food 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

Each setting should exercise their discretion in each case as this scheme is not intended to continue on an ongoing basis for any individual pupil. This flexibility relates to food support only.

5. Vulnerable bursaries

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

- LAC (this includes those classed as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child).
- Previously LAC (PLAC).
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit 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 in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in their own right.

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

Via the application form, the setting will remind parents that they will not be able to continue to claim Child Benefit if the student successfully applies for ESA.

Students who are in one or more of these categories will be able to apply for a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200.

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 setting will consider the number of hours involved in eligible students' study programmes when deciding if a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

The setting may pay a student in a vulnerable group more than £1,200 if it believes the student needs extra help to remain in education; the extra payment will be paid from the setting's discretionary bursary allocation or its own funds. The rationale for such a decision will be included as part of the setting's auditable records.

The setting will only pay students the amount they need to access education, based on individual assessment. Students will not automatically receive £1,200 or a set amount of funding unless this is in line with their actual financial need.

The setting will only submit a funding claim to the SBSS once sufficient evidence has been provided and the setting 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 setting decides that a student is ineligible for funding in accordance with the above criteria, the setting will explain to the student and/or the student's parents 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 setting. The setting 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 setting will ensure its bursary application form is clear about the possibility of no award or a reduced award.

6. Paying bursary funding to eligible students

The setting will aim to pay all funding in-kind, using cash payments only where necessary.

Payment in-kind may include, for example, travel passes, vouchers or credits for meals, or required books or equipment for courses studied. Cash will not be given to parents, carers or students directly.

Where in-kind payments are given to students within vulnerable groups, the setting will explain the value of these payments to the student and how these have been deducted from the total amount received.

Where necessary, and if payments are made to students, rather than in-kind, the funding will be paid by BACS transfer to the student's own bank account.

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 setting will consider who will manage the bursary on the student's behalf.

The setting 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 setting 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 setting will adhere to good practice guidelines to make regular payments to students on when required.

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

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

- Every student who qualifies for a bursary is supported by their form teacher, head of year, and learning mentor to decide the best way to allocate their support
- Priority areas are addressed first, including travel to the setting, equipment costs and support with studies
- Students are 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 SBM on sarah.bailey@altbridgeschool.com or 0151 477 8310.

The setting may use up to 5 percent of its allocation from the DFE for administrative costs.

7. 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.

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 attendance above an agreed percentage unless the absence is authorised. Consideration will be given to the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

Students in receipt of bursaries will be expected to abide by the Behaviour Policy of the setting.

Where there are concerns regarding a student's attendance or behaviour, the setting 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 setting may 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 setting will always consider the impact of this on the student.

The setting may specify 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 upon confirming eligibility for the bursary.

The setting 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 and food, receipts will not be collected for each transaction, and will instead be evidenced initially by receipts and then paid afterwards linked to attendance. Students may be asked at various points in the year to provide further receipts. For one-off or infrequent costs, receipts will always be collected. In all cases, students will not be asked to incur expenditure and provide a receipt prior to receiving funding – payment will be made first and a receipt provided afterwards, as necessary.

The setting 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.

8. Recycling bursaries

The setting 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 2025).

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

If the setting has sufficient funds to cover the costs of a full bursary (£1,200), 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 setting 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 setting 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 2025). Funds will be allocated in this way on a case-by-case basis after assessing students' needs.

The setting will consider carrying forward any unspent funds to the next academic year, but not for more than one 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 setting's new academic year allocation.

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

9. 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 DFE.

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

10. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the head of post 16. The next scheduled review date is November 2026.

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

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