

## Financial Support For Learners Policy 2025-26

Publication Date	05.11.2025
Version Number	1.1
Policy Owner	Deputy Principal – Inclusion & Student Experience
Approval Level	Trust Board
Applies To (job roles relevant to)	All
Next Review Due	May 2026

### Policy Scope

The Lighthouse Learning Trust is committed to helping students overcome financial barriers by ensuring that students, parents/carers and relevant external agencies have access to high quality information and advice regarding the financial support we offer. The Trust’s Financial Support for Learners fund (sometimes referred to as a bursary) is available to assist students who are in **proven financial need** so that they can successfully complete their programme of study. The Trust aims to comply with the relevant funding guidelines provided by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (“ESFA”).

### Policy Aims

The aims of the policy are to:

- Ensure that Bursary Funds are allocated and administered in accordance with ESFA guidelines and policies.
- Describe the guiding principles and eligibility for how financial support is allocated.
- Explain the procedure for dealing with any appeals or complaints in relation to financial support.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The **Executive Principal** has responsibility for ensuring that this policy and related procedures are properly implemented and is accountable for the College’s use of the funds.

The **Deputy Principal Inclusion and Student Experience** is responsible for:

- Updating this policy.
- Setting criteria for implementation.
- Ensuring effective promotion of the financial support offer.
- Oversight of effectiveness of procedures in relation to student experience.
- Decision making on allocation of funds.
- Reporting of uptake and use of bursary funds, including effectiveness and impact.

The **Bursary Panel** is responsible for:

- Reviewing appeals from students where bursary funding has been declined and making decisions.
- Reviewing requests or circumstances which are not covered by this Policy and making decisions.
- Providing feedback and comment on Bursary Policy & procedures.

The **Trust Finance Manager** is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with funding rules.
- Ensuring strong financial management of each bursary fund.
- Software set up, implementation and ongoing management of software.
- Identifying training needs and ensuring those requiring training are able to access training resources.

**Administration Team Leader** is responsible for:

- Overseeing the administration of the fund.
- Ensuring the Admissions & Schools Liaison and Guidance Teams are trained and all well informed.
- Making recommendations on decisions on allocation of funds to the Deputy Principal Inclusion and Student Experience.
- Liaising with Finance regarding the administration and procurement of resources for students
- Ensuring that audit requirements are met.
- Liaising with students and staff, including Personal Tutors regarding appropriate interventions to support students with their studies.
- Acting as the first point of contact for any appeal or complaint in relation to the funds.

**Administration team members** are responsible for:

- Liaising with students and staff to support applications to the bursary fund, either through the enrolment cycle, or at ad hoc points in the year. In the case of students returning for a second year, the admin team are responsible for confirming that their financial circumstances remain unchanged.
- Ensuring that the fund is publicised in a timely and appropriate manner to inform young people starting college in the following academic year.
- Reviewing applications against the criteria, using our software platform.

**Admissions** are responsible for:

- Liaising with students and staff to support applications to the bursary fund, either through the enrolment cycle, or at ad hoc points in the year.
- Ensuring that the fund is publicised in a timely and appropriate manner to inform young people starting college in the following academic year.

**Personal Tutors** are responsible for:

- Liaising with students and staff to support students to make applications to the bursary fund, either through the enrolment cycle, or at ad hoc points in the year, or, in the case of students returning for second years, to ensure they have confirmed their financial circumstances are unchanged.
- Ensuring that the fund is publicised in a timely and appropriate manner to inform young people starting college in the following academic year.
- Reviewing attendance and behaviour data for their tutees who are in receipt of bursary.
- For students in receipt of bursary whose attendance is below 90%, meeting with those students and agreeing action plans for improving attendance and/ or behaviour.
- Making recommendations to the Bursary Panel regarding continuation or withdrawal of Bursary.

The **Trust Board** is responsible for ensuring that the Trust has appropriate policies and procedures in place for the distribution of financial support funds.

## How we publicise the support available

- **Prior to enrolling** at one of our colleges: publicise in college marketing materials and communications, at Open Evenings, and presentations in school.
- **At Enrolment** – all applicants, and their parents/guardians will be invited to meet with staff to discuss the bursary fund. Staff will be able to provide assistance with the financial support application process.
- **During a student's programme of study** - financial support information is advertised through a number of media including college websites, college bulletins, student portal, posters, tutorial, counselling and wellbeing support, and student & parent guides.
- **Subject and Personal Tutors** will also be reminded of the funds so that they are able to direct appropriate students for financial support during the year.

## What support we can offer

Support is based on proven need, an individual's specific circumstances and availability of funds.

The list of things that we are able to support may include items on the list below. It should be noted that the list is non-exhaustive. Where a bursary award is made for one or more items, further requests for support for other items will be treated as new requests, and award is not automatic.

- Bus transport to and from college
- Food when attending college via provision of a lunch allowance to be spent in the cafeteria
- Course resources costs (where the expenditure is related to the qualification being studied, but not a mandatory requirement to achieve the qualification)
- Trips (where the expenditure is related to the qualification being studied, but not a mandatory requirement to achieve the qualification).
- Print credit
- Text books
- UCAS admin fee
- Art starter packs (course related)
- Sports/PE kit (course related)

## Bursary criteria for awarding bursary, and for ongoing provision of bursary

There are two sets of criteria governing bursary- criteria governing initial award, and criteria that we require students to meet throughout their time with us at college. Details of these are as follows:

### Criteria to be met at application stage- learners aged 16 to 19

- Student aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025. We do not receive funding for students who are aged 19 or over, immediately preceding the start of the academic year. A student aged 19+ would only be eligible to apply for financial support if they are completing a learning programme started at College whilst they were aged under 19 at the start of their first year of study, or they have an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).
- Eligible under Government and/or local charity guidelines - students accessing financial support must meet the eligibility criteria set out in the latest EFSA 16-19 Bursary Fund Guide and should be participating in provision which is funded by the EFSA.
- Enrolled with a signed Learner Agreement and undertaking a full programme of study.
- Fully completed Financial Support application submitted, with appropriate supporting evidence.

### **Criteria to be met throughout the student's time at college**

- Attendance expectation is 100%. Where a student's attendance falls below 90%, bursary support may be withdrawn.
- Appropriate behaviour in accordance with Student Behaviour Policy.

### **When criteria are not met during the student's time at college**

- Students will be required to meet with their Personal Tutors to discuss issue(s) and agree targets for improvement to support progress.
- Personal Tutors will make recommendations to Bursary Panel regarding the continuation or withdrawal of financial support.
- Bursary Panel will make decisions regarding the continuation, reduction or withdrawal of financial support.
- If improvements are not made and criteria continue not to be met, financial support may be withdrawn .
- If attendance is below 90% the value of support given may be reduced to reflect the reduced attendance, for example for support of value £100 for a student with attendance of 80% the support will be reduced to £80.

### **How support is provided**

In most cases, support will be provided through the provision of resources, such as a bus pass, items of equipment, and a lunch allowance. In the case of support for trips, the student will be notified in writing of how much support, if any can be provided towards the cost of a trip.

### **Appeals**

If an award is refused, or the award is subject to any conditions, this will be communicated in writing.

Students have the right to appeal. Appeals must be:

- Made within 10 working days of the award notice.
- Made via the Appeals Questionnaire in Pay My Student .
- State the grounds on which they wish to appeal.

### **Grounds for Appeal**

Grounds for appeal are limited to:

1. Incorrect interpretation by us of income evidence
2. Incorrect calculation of income
3. Change of family income or other family circumstance between date of application and date of decline of award or award
4. Exceptional circumstances

Appeals will be reviewed by the Bursary Panel.

We will provide a response to all appeals within 10 working days of receipt of appeal, or receipt of further relevant information and evidence, whichever is the later date.

### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

The Trust celebrates and promotes equality and diversity for all. We aim to create an environment where everyone feels safe and valued and within which they are treated with dignity and respect. We recognise that all individuals are different and have different needs. We confirm an entitlement of equality, diversity & inclusion for all those who make up the college, including prospective students.

## Types of Support Available

Note 1: Criteria apply to a student’s time at college as well as at application stage.

Note 2: The Trust’s policy, and the values contained within it, are subject to change in accordance with updates to the “16-19 Bursary Fund Guide 2025 to 2026 Academic Year”, as and when updates are published by the Department for Education (“DfE”).

ESFA name	Main Criteria	What support may be available
<b>Vulnerable Student Grants</b>	Care leavers	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
	Students looked after by the Local Authority	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
	Students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own right	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
	Disabled and in receipt of Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
	Household income under £32,000	Applications are assessed on an individual basis. Where there is a proven need, and the costs are relevant to the programme, support with any combination of the items detailed in ‘What can we help with’ (see above) may be given, in whole or as a contribution
<b>Free College Meals</b>	Students on a household income of below £16,190, in receipt of income-related ESA, Income Support or income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net income of no more than £7400), Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit.	<p>The government funds free college meals for students whose household income is below a threshold set by them, currently £16,190. Further details of the governments guidance can be found at <a href="https://www.gov.uk">Apply for free school meals - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a> The process for applying for free college meals is incorporated as part of this policy.</p> <p>Students whose bursary application is approved will normally be provided with a lunch allowance. In the majority of cases the allowance must be spent in the college cafeteria.</p>
<b>Lighthouse Learning Trust Welfare Fund</b>	Available to all students	<p>The Trust allocates a small sum of money to assist students in <i>immediate</i> financial need.</p> <p>All students may apply to this fund through the bursary channel. The Student Services Manager will make decisions on values up to £50, thereafter approval of the Deputy Principal – Inclusion &amp; Student Experience is required. The fund can support specific small costs at any time throughout the year, such as: lunch costs or</p>

		one-off travel costs. <b>Support may be made as a loan which is required to be paid back</b>
<b>Child Care</b>	For students who are parents themselves	Once Students make a bursary application, if support with childcare is requested a questionnaire will be published in their account within Pay My Student for the student to complete to apply for funding

### How and When to Apply

Students and their families must apply for support using our software, **PayMyStudent**, the link to which can be found on college websites.

Students and parents/guardians of under 18 year old's must accept and agree to abide by the criteria outlined above in the declaration at the end of the application form.

Giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. Incorrect information may also result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

The deadline for **First Round Applications is 30<sup>th</sup> September**. A completed application with the relevant supporting documentation is mandatory. If your financial position changes and you have missed the deadline you are welcome to make a new application. Applications are dealt with in date order and we aim to assess and confirm the financial support decision within 10 working days. We cannot guarantee support for applications. Early application is more likely to be successful given the availability of funds.

All grants will be subject to a detailed **financial assessment** based on:

- Household income of all adults over 18 who live in the same household as the student – if the student is 16 -18 and lives at home. Student's income – if you live independently and are 16-19 as at 1 September 2025, or if you are over 19.

Documentary evidence, to support figures given, must be submitted via the PayMyStudent portal.

**No assessment can be made without supporting evidence.** If any of the evidence given is later found to be fraudulent support will be withdrawn and this will be reported to the relevant authorities.

The deadline for **Second Round Applications is 31 October**.

### How and when we will tell you whether you have been awarded a bursary

Once you have supplied all the requested evidence, we will assess your application.

Fully completed applications will be assessed and awarded within 10 working days.

Students/parents will be notified of their award by email. If an award is refused, or the award is subject to any conditions, this will be explained in writing.

If the student's attendance falls below an acceptable level, or if a student's attitude to study is poor, the College reserves the right to withdraw any further payments of the award.

If the student is asked to leave college or chooses to leave college before the end of the course, no further payments of the award will be made after the leaving date. All reasonable attempts will be made to reclaim a portion of the grant if applicable to individual cases.

### **Equalities Statement:**

The Trust is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion for all. Therefore, it is extremely important to us that the contractors and partners we work with both understand the importance and practice the principles in applying the Equalities Act 2010 to the delivery of their services. Should any issues arise during the course of our work together, we expect our contractors and partners to fully adhere to our approach whilst working with us and when required provide appropriate evidence of their own commitment to these significant principles and legal requirements. For clarification the requirements are set out below:

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the work place and wider society, it also imposes a public sector equality duty. The College is specifically listed as a public authority under schedule 19, section 149 of the Act. Please note that duty also extends to contractors working with the College.

In summary, those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Please note that the following categories are defined as protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and Civil partnership (in employment), Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (Gender) and Sexual orientation.

### **Links to other policies:**

Student Attendance Policy

Student Behaviour Policy

### **Document History**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Purpose / Change</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.1	Significant revisions	Deputy Principal – Inclusion & Student Experience	22.10.2025