



TAPESTRY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Post 16 Bursary Policy

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Revision History

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1.0 Policy Aims and Scope

Tapestry Learning Partnership (Tapestry) is committed to ensuring all children and young people succeed and flourish. Financial hardship should never be a barrier to this, particularly in post-16 education.

This policy outlines how the Tapestry manages and distributes the DfE 16–19 Bursary Fund across its academies with post-16 provision. The funding is intended to help students meet the specific actual costs of participating in their study programmes (e.g. transport, essential books, specialist equipment, uniform, or field trips).

2.0 Types of Bursary

There are two types of bursaries available across our post-16 provisions:

A. Vulnerable Student Bursary

Eligible students can receive up to £1,200 per academic year (pro-rata for courses lasting under 30 weeks), depending on their actual financial need.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Students in care/care leavers.
- Students receiving Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name because they are financially independent.
- Students receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) plus Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in their own name.

Note: A student meeting these criteria does not automatically receive the full £1,200 if their actual course-related costs are lower, or if they have no financial need (as assessed by the academy).

B. Discretionary Bursary

Academies award discretionary bursaries to students who do not qualify for the Vulnerable Bursary but face financial barriers to education.

Eligibility Criteria:

- **Household Income Threshold:** Generally awarded to students whose household income is below a specific threshold per annum (inclusive of benefits) set by the individual academy.
- **Specific Hardship:** Short-term financial support for students experiencing sudden family hardship or sudden change in financial circumstances.

The level of award depends on assessment of the specific needs of the student.

3.0 Eligibility Requirements

To receive either bursary, a student must meet the following criteria:

- **Age:** Be aged 16 or over, but under 19 as at 31 August prior to the start of each academic year

- (or aged 19–24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)).
- **Residency:** Satisfy the DfE residency criteria (normally resident in the UK/EEA for three years prior to course start).
- **Course:** Be enrolled on an eligible, state-funded study programme at one of the Trust's post-16 academies.

4.0 Assessment, Proof and Provision of Support

In-Kind Support First

Where possible, Tapestry provides support in-kind rather than direct cash payments. This includes:

- Direct purchase of required books, stationery, or specialist equipment.
- Travel passes or meal vouchers/allowances.
- Direct payment for mandatory educational visits.

Proof of Eligibility

Applications must be supported by official documentary evidence (e.g., Tax Credit Statements, Universal Credit award notices covering three recent months, P60s, or proof of benefit entitlement).

5.0 Conditions of Payment

Bursary funding is dependent on students maintaining acceptable standards of effort, attendance, and conduct. Continued receipt of funding is conditional upon:

1. **Attendance:** Maintaining a minimum of 95% attendance across all timetabled lessons, tutorials, and supervised study periods (unexplained absences will result in withheld payments).
2. **Punctuality & Conduct:** Adhering to the Post-16 Student Code of Conduct and meeting coursework/study expectations.

6.0 Application Process and Governance

Each academy will have processes that are communicated with their students and their families on how the application process works within their academy. Below are the principles and deadlines these processes are based upon:

- **Timeline:** Applications open at the start of the Autumn term. The main application deadline is 30 September, though applications for sudden financial hardship can be made at any point in the academic year.
- **Local Panel Review:** Each academy maintains a Post-16 Bursary Panel (Head of Sixth Form, Finance Officer, and Headteacher/Designee) to review applications impartially.
- **Trust Oversight:** Tapestry's Central Finance Team reviews allocations across all three academies annually to ensure equity, consistency, and compliance with DfE rules. Unspent allocations are pooled or redistributed in accordance with DfE guidelines to support overall Trust post-16 hardship needs.

7.0 Appeals and Complaints

If an application is declined or a student feels the award is insufficient:

1. **Stage 1 (Informal):** Discuss the decision with the local Head of Sixth Form within 10 school days of notification.
2. **Stage 2 (Formal Appeal):** Submit a written appeal to the Academy Headteacher within 10 school days of the Stage 1 outcome.
3. **Stage 3 (Trust Panel):** If unresolved locally, the appeal will be escalated to a Trust Executive Director/Nominated Trustee, whose decision is final.

8.0 Fraud and Confidentiality

- **Data Protection:** All financial documentation is treated in strict confidence under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- **Fraudulent Claims:** Fraudulent applications will result in immediate termination of the bursary, recovery of funds, and disciplinary action under the Post-16 Conduct Policy.