Little Gate College

16 to 19 Vulnerable Groups Bursary Policy

2026 to 2027

PURPOSE

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.
- discretionary bursaries (up to age 24 where there is an Education and Health Care Plan in place) which institutions award using policies they set, in line with the DfE funding rules.

This policy sets out how Little Gate college (the college) will work with the bursary funds provided for defined vulnerable groups during 2026 to 2027.

Please see our separate policy, criteria and application process for the DfE Discretionary Bursary.

DEFINED VULNERABLE GROUPS

The 'Defined Vulnerable Groups' bursary fund is for students who are aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2026. The College is responsible for informing students/parents/carers about the bursary so they can identify if they are eligible to apply. The bursary is allocated by the DfE to which the College will make the application on behalf of students once it has confirmed their eligibility for the fund. Applications can be made if students are:

- in care
- recent care leavers
- receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner
- receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) **or UC in their own right**

UC has now been fully rolled out and so young people aged 16 to 18 who apply now will no longer be in receipt of the other benefits listed above.

CARE LEAVERS

A 'care leaver' is defined as:

1. a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or

2. a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

Only students who meet this definition are eligible if they have a financial need.

WHAT IT CAN PAY FOR

The bursary fund is intended to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme. Help with the cost of essential books or equipment or with the cost of travelling to college, for example. The bursary fund is not intended to support costs not related to education (living costs), extra-curricular activities or provide learning support – services that colleges give to students – such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.

PAYMENTS

Wherever possible, payments will be made in-kind rather than in cash. Please note that even though a student may pass the eligibility criteria, they may not receive an award because their financial costs are already being met by other sources. Or a reduced award could be made because the financial help they need is limited. For example, a student may be in the care of a local authority that is covering the costs of their education in full. Or travel costs are being met by a student's local authority.

A bursary will only be paid if attendance and behaviour meet our required standards.

OTHER BENEFITS

If you are successful in receiving bursary funding it does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or, generally, Universal Credit.

Please note that our policy is to maintain strict confidentiality in the review and storage of any information that is held.

HOW TO APPLY

You can download an application form from the website, request that an application form is posted to you or collect one from the college. We can help if you require any further information or have questions about how to complete your application.

There is also a guide for students (and parents) which can be found on the government's website as follows: https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMESCALES

Applications and full supporting evidence (see application form) should be submitted to the college by 30 September 2026

Please note that our policy is to maintain strict confidentiality in the review and storage of these documents.

A panel will then consider your application, and the college will let you know shortly after the above closing dates, if it will proceed to submit a claim to the DfE. Where the panel approves an application, purchases on behalf of applicants will commence as soon as possible.