



# 16–19 Bursary Fund Policy

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## Our Vision and Ethos

Nishkam schools are Sikh ethos multi-faith or faith ethos schools that take a distinctive approach to many traditional faith schools. The Nishkam School's Multi-Academy Trust education model is led by virtues such as, compassion, humility, service, contentment, optimism, trust and forgiveness. Virtues are prevalent throughout our teaching and learning model and are modelled by our pupils, staff and teachers. Our pupils explore the divine context of humanity and wonder of all creation and also learn from the wisdom of all religions and in doing so explore the infinite human potential to do good unconditionally. We support all pupils and staff to develop aspects of their own religious, spiritual or human identities. In service of God, we pray for guidance in this endeavour and forgiveness for the errors we may make.

### 1. Aims

Our school aims to:

- Have clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the type of support that is available and the means of applying for it
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

### 2. Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance>

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

#### What is the 16-19 Bursary Fund?

A key priority for the Government is to close the gap in attainment between those from less well-off and more affluent backgrounds, and to ensure every young person participates in and benefits from a place in 16 to 19 education or training. The fund is limited and is allocated by the EFA to Schools and Colleges to administer.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund targets support towards the most financially disadvantaged 16- to 19-year-olds – those who most need help with the costs of staying on. A 16-19 Bursary will only be awarded to a student who is eligible and facing genuine financial barriers to participation.

### 3. Definitions

- 'In care' is defined as: children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the [Children Act 1989](#)) or under a care order ([section 31](#) of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Looked after child' is defined as: a child in the care of a local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the authority in the exercise of any functions for more than 24 hours ([section 22](#) of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Care leaver' is defined in The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 as:
  - 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
  - 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

### 4. Roles and responsibilities

#### 4.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy and also has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

In our schools, the implementation of this policy has been delegated to the Head of Sixth Form.

#### 4.2 School Leader

The School Leader is responsible for: ensuring staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and that it is being applied consistently; setting eligibility criteria for bursary funding and making sure these comply with the Equality Act 2010 (this responsibility is delegated to the Head of Sixth Form); and promoting awareness of the 16 to 19 bursary fund to prospective applicants and their parents/carers (this responsibility is delegated to the Head of Sixth Form).

#### 4.3 Staff

Our staff are responsible for implementing these 16 to 19 bursary fund policies consistently. The senior leadership team (SLT) will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.

#### 4.4 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the School Leader of any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy and any change in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding.

### **5. How we use the bursary fund**

Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See section 6 below for details of our eligibility criteria.

The fund is intended to support students aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

The Bursary award may typically be used for:

1. Transport costs
2. Books and Equipment
3. Hardship Costs
4. Additional Programme of Study Costs – field trips, study days etc.
5. Cost of travel to HE interviews
6. Specialist clothing required for a course
7. Sixth Form social event participation
8. Other discretionary areas

### **6. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries**

**Please note:** the following eligibility criteria will be assessed **in addition** to the individual student's actual financial needs. No student will automatically be awarded an amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have.

#### 6.1 Age

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2024 to 2025 academic year, students must be 16 years and over, but under 19 on 31 August 2024 and enrolled on full-time (minimum 12 hours guided study per week) government funded course(s).

Students aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18-years-old, or
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.

In exceptional circumstances, where students under 16 years old are on a funded 16 to 19 study programme at our school, we may use our discretion to pay bursaries to these younger students. However, if these students are enrolled at another institution that receives public funding for them, they will not be eligible for bursary funding.

### 6.2 Eligible education provision

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Be funded directly by the ESFA or by the ESFA via a local authority;
- Be otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is on the ESFA's list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19.

Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme are also eligible to receive a bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course.

Students are not eligible if:

- They are on an apprenticeship programme; or
- Are on any waged training

Students who are studying via distance learning are eligible for either 16 to 19 bursary, but are likely to require financial help on a more infrequent basis (e.g. travel to exams). If this is the case, we will provide support in-kind, such as a travel pass, details of which shall be decided on a case-by-case basis.

### 6.3 Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the [ESFA funding regulations for post-16 provision](#).

### 6.4 Asylum seekers

Accompanied asylum seekers under 18 with an adult relative or partner, and asylum seekers aged 18 and above are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum seekers who have not had asylum refused.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children:

- Are the responsibility of the local authority;
- Are to be treated as 'looked after' children; and
- Are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, where they have a financial need

When these students reach 18-years-old, we will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary as a student from a defined vulnerable group if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the upper age limit.

### 6.5 Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Students with a financial need, who meet 1 of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (NB: those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after);
- 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; or
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

UC has now replaced IS, as well as other benefits above, for current and future young people aged 16 to 18. However, students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (19+ continuers and students with an EHC plan) may still receive the legacy benefits listed above.

Students who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary. Students will not receive the bursary if they do not have any actual financial need (for example, because their financial needs are met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs).

Where a bursary is provided, the funds will generally be up to £1,200 per year for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, cases will be looked at individually and the outcome based on a particular student's needs. Students will only receive the amount they actually need to participate and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, and provide more than £1,200 per year if such would be necessary in all the circumstances for the student to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from our discretionary bursary allocation or our own funds.

If a student's study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, they will be paid a pro-rata amount. We will also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding whether a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a bursary for vulnerable groups if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

We will provide this support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible. It will not be provided as regular payments for living costs.

#### 6.6 Discretionary bursaries

In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy 1 or more of the following criteria: Students who are able to demonstrate financial hardship arising from other reasons, may apply for a discretionary bursary.

In assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the institution, or a location for a placement
- The number of dependent children in the student's household
- The requirements of their study programme
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help

There is no set limit for the amount of discretionary bursary that can be awarded to students. We will base all decisions around which students receive a discretionary bursary, and how much bursary they receive, on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a discretionary bursary if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

#### **Exceptional help**

Under **exceptional** circumstances, **any** students who are experiencing **short-term financial hardship** who are not automatically eligible for an award can also apply for help with one-off course related expenses (proof of income or hardship will be asked for). Applications for additional help will be considered on an individual basis and is dependent upon available funds.

The amount payable is dependent upon individual circumstances, and on the number of applications received by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

## 6.7 Evidence

Parents/guardians in receipt of any of the following must provide supporting documentary evidence:

- Income Support (Universal Credit)
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, but not Working Tax Credit, and have an annual taxable income below £16,190 (being the threshold for Free School Meals)
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate

If you are not in receipt of any of the above, but reside in a household which has a total household taxable income of between £16,191 and £40,000 for the tax year 2024-25, you may also apply for the Discretionary Bursary although your payment allocation will be a lower amount.

Household income must be evidenced by providing one or more of the following, by **30<sup>th</sup> September 2025**.

- P60
- Working Tax Credit Award Certificate
- Self-Assessment Tax Calculation Form (SA302)

## **7. Application and payment process**

### 7.1 Applications

Applications should ideally be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 to allow enough time for our school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. This date will be clearly stated on the application form.

However, we acknowledge that students' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole school year.

Applicants will be notified in writing (either via email or via letter) whether their application has been successful, together with the amount of funding awarded. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their application for a bursary, they must follow the school's complaints procedure.

### 7.2 Payment process

Payments are made using the following process: Payments will be made in two instalments, usually paid in October and February. Banding is applied on review of applications, taking into account the two tiers below;

*Level 1 – students who have a gross annual household income of up to £16,190*

*Level 2 – students who have a gross annual household income of between £16,190 and £40,000*

### 7.3 Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

Payments of the bursary are conditional on students meeting the following conditions in relation to their standards of attendance and behaviour:

#### **Conditions**

To receive any funds once the school has acknowledged eligibility, participating students at Nishkam School's must adhere to the following criteria.

- 96% + attendance at all timetabled lessons and registrations unless they have prior permission from the Head of Sixth Form for authorised absence. Holidays will not be authorised. We will allow for one period of absence due to ill health (maximum of 3 consecutive days) each half term without loss of funds. Approved Examination Study Leave, participation on approved educational trips, or approved representative activities will be counted as an attendance.

- If students are unacceptably late to lesson or registration, then these will count as an absence and therefore the payment will not be made for that week.
- Students must abide by the standards of behaviour and effort as agreed at the start of their learning programme. If poor behaviour or effort is reported and supported by documentary evidence, the student will not be paid for that week
- Bursary payments will be paid either in-kind (i.e. travel passes, course materials etc), directly into the student's bank account or via internal transfers when appropriate (i.e. trips, exam resit fees)

All students are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions.

Students who fail to meet these conditions may have their payment withheld, but we will always take students' individual circumstances into consideration. This includes considering the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

We will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays) and where students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

We reserve the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

We will consider the impact of such an action on the individual student before taking a final decision to do so, and any decision will be confirmed to the student in writing.

## **9. Change in circumstances**

If there are changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers must notify the school without delay.

## **9. Record keeping**

The school will maintain comprehensive and accurate records relating to the 16 to 19 bursary fund. These records will be kept securely. Records will include, but are not limited to: Copies of application forms and supporting evidence; Records of 'zero bursary' students; Details of assessment decisions and rationale for awards; Records of all payments made to students, including dates, value and purpose; and Evidence of student attendance and progress monitoring. Records will be retained for six academic years after the end of the academic year in which the student completed their programme.

## **10. Unspent funds**

Funding for discretionary bursary funding cannot be carried forward for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the ESFA using the [online enquiry form](#), specifying the amount of funding and the year/s it relates to, no later than 31 March each year. The ESFA will recover all unspent funds.

## **11. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed by the Heads of Sixth Form and School Leaders annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust Board.

## **Appendix 1 Questions and Answers**

### **Will evidence of my financial circumstances be required?**

Yes - evidence to support your application will be required by the School. See the Application Form for details. All evidence of household income will be in strict confidence.

### **Is there a deadline to submit the application?**

You must submit your Application Form to the Head of Sixth Form by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

### **What happens if my (or my parent/carer) financial circumstances change during the year?**

If your circumstances, or your parent/carers circumstances, change during the year, we can accept in-year applications.

### **How will I receive my payments?**

To receive payments, you (**the student**) must have a bank account in your own name that will accept BACS payments. No cash payments will be made and payments to parent/carer accounts isn't permitted.

### **What are my responsibilities?**

You must provide accurate information and appropriate documentary evidence where needed

If you are in receipt of an award, you must comply with the Sixth Form Agreement and the Bursary Fund Student Policy and Agreement

You must inform the School of changes in your household financial circumstances.

### **Can I appeal against the decision?**

Yes, an appeal must be made in writing to the Head of Sixth Form explaining clearly what is being appealed and why you believe the decision to be incorrect. Additional evidence to support the appeal may be required.

If you feel the appeal has not addressed the issue you raised appropriately, you can ask for your appeals to be passed on to Stage Two whereby the original appeal application and supporting evidence will be passed on to the Appeals Panel whose decision will be final.

### **So.....what do I do now?**

To make an application you must obtain advice from the Sixth Form Team and, if appropriate, arrange an interview with the Head of Sixth Form.

The purpose of the interview is to advise you and to ensure that appropriate documentary evidence is provided. The viability of the claim will not be assessed.

The Head of Sixth Form will meet with the School Leader to consider each claim and make a decision in accordance with the fund guidelines.