

Free Meals in Education and 16 - 19 Bursary Fund

Guidelines for New Applicants 2026-2027

Free Meals in Education

FLT receives funding to provide a free meal to all eligible students for each day the student attends their study programme. More information about free meals can be found on the government website

[Free school meals: guidance for local authorities, local-authority-maintained schools, academies and free schools - GOV.UK](#)

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, the government is expanding FSM (Free School or College Meal) eligibility to all students from households in receipt of Universal Credit *regardless* of household earnings. Free Meals are available to students in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

A student is only eligible to receive a Free Meal where both:

- a claim for this support has been made
- their eligibility has been verified by FLT

Households may also be entitled to a meal if they:

- are in receipt of income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- receive the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- meet criteria set out in separate guidance for [families with no recourse to public funds](#)

If eligible:

- the Free Meal allowance of £6.00 is added to the students ID card daily, in confidence via our canteen system.
- Students can access this allowance at any time (subject to canteen opening times), it is not restricted to lunchtime.
- Students can, of course, top up their account with their own funds. The system will always use the Free Meals allowance before it takes money from their personal top-up.

16-19 Bursary Fund

Overview

The Bursary Fund is available to students who may need financial support to enable them to study at the Trust. Any student enrolled can apply for the Bursary, provided they satisfy the eligibility criteria detailed in this guide. Awards will be made based on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial needs.

These guidelines give further details about student eligibility, how and when to apply and the costs that can be supported.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation, so they can remain in further education.

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

Your residency status is verified when you enrol.

Types of Bursaries

There are two types of bursaries available:

1. **Bursaries for students in defined vulnerable groups** – The defined groups reflect students who are unlikely to be receiving financial assistance from parents or carers, so may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate in their education.
2. **Discretionary bursaries** – Students who are not eligible for the vulnerable bursary can apply for the discretionary bursary. This bursary helps lower income students who might otherwise not stay in education, or who will struggle without financial help. Most applications will fit into this category.

The bursary is available to students in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Or

- If your household income is below **£35,000 per year (gross)**.

A student is only eligible to receive a bursary where both:

- a claim for this support has been made
- their eligibility has been verified by the Trust

A bursary can cover a range of needs and resources such as:

- Travel
- Meals
- Essential educational trips / activities linked to any of the A Level courses they are studying
- Student learning resources and the administration fee
- Support with travel to universities for open days
- Essential equipment such as a scientific calculator

These are just a few examples where the bursary can assist with a student's participation in education. The amount of financial support will depend on the money available to the Trust and the number of students applying.

Contents:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups: eligibility, evidence to apply and what it covers
- Discretionary Bursary: eligibility, evidence to apply and what it covers
- Bursary Summary
- Further information – Costs we do support
- Further information – Costs we do not support
- How to apply, when to apply and what happens next

Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups: Are you eligible?

Bursaries in this category are for students in defined vulnerable groups. Students who meet the criteria and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. The defined groups reflect that these students are unlikely to be receiving financial assistance from parents or carers, so may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate in their education. Awards are capped at £1,200 per year and are based on the essential costs of participating in their A level course. If support is required above the £1,200 threshold, this will be funded from the discretionary bursary allocations.

The following students are eligible to apply for this type of bursary:

- Students who are **in local authority care**, or who have **recently left local authority care** (also known as 'Children in Care' and 'Care Leavers').
- Students who **receive Universal Credit in their own name** (because they are financially supporting themselves)
- Students **receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own name as well as Employment & Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own name**

Defining *in care* and *care leavers*:

For the purposes of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, the definitions are:

- **'in care'** means young people 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). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'.
- **'care leaver'** means either:
 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

Most care-experienced young people have, or will have had, a Social Worker.

Foster Care: including privately arranged foster care. A young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, is classed as looked after. They meet the 'in care' criteria for the bursary for defined vulnerable groups.

A young person who is **privately fostered** (in other words, a private arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the young person) is not classed as a looked after child and is not eligible for the defined vulnerable group bursary but may well be eligible for the Discretionary Bursary.

In some instances, a young person may have been in the care of the local authority and the care transferred to another party via a permanent form of fostering such as a **Special Guardianship Order**. In these circumstances, the young person is defined as having *left care* so is now a *care leaver*. They must meet the definition of a 'care leaver' in full (so, the period of weeks and age range set out above) to be eligible.

Bursary for defined vulnerable groups: What evidence do you need?

If you are eligible to apply for this type of bursary, you must be able to provide us with at least one of the pieces of evidence below:

Eligibility	Evidence Type
Students who are 'in care' or 'care leavers'	Confirmation to verify your current circumstances in a letter or email from the relevant Local Authority, on headed paper
Students in receipt of Universal Credit in <u>their own name</u>	A copy of your 3 most recent monthly Universal Credit award statements. (You should be able to print off details of your award from your online account).
Students in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment in <u>their own name</u> AND Employment & Support Allowance OR Universal Credit in <u>their own name</u>	Your DLA /PIP Award Letter and/or evidence of payments made into your account within the last 3 months AND A copy of your 3 most recent monthly ESA / Universal Credit award statements. (You should be able to print off details of your award from your online account).

Bursary for defined vulnerable groups: What does it cover?

If you are eligible to apply for this type of bursary, FLT will seek to support you with the following costs:

Travel	By means of assessment, if the most effective method of public transport travel incurs a cost i.e. (not by bus) then FLT will cover these costs.
FLT Meals (If not already in receipt of Free Meals in Education)	£6.00 per day that you are timetabled to be at College/School, redeemable in the Canteen via your ID card
General Stationery	Up to £20 credit allocated in the Autumn Term, with a further £20 in the Spring Term and £20 in the Summer Term to be used to purchase stationery from the Trust store in the Library
Art Materials	Funds for Art materials, will be available for Art students and the amount will be notified at the award.
Essential course related trips / Field Trips	Fund/part fund essential activities that are linked to chosen A level courses

Scientific Calculator (Casio FX-991CW) – Recommended by the Mathematics Department	The Trust will purchase and supply a Casio FX-991CW (recommended by the Mathematics Department) for students studying Maths, any of the sciences, Economics, Psychology & Sociology
Laptop Loans	Laptops will be loaned to the student for the duration of their study, where there is a need.
Books	Modern Foreign Languages (up to £12.00 per language in L6)
Visits to universities – Open days, interviews, holder days	FLT support travel costs of up to 3 visits per academic year to universities, only if it relates to the student's future progression plan. Capped at maximum of £240.00 – (incl a Student Railcard) to contribute towards the 3 visits.
UCAS Application Fee	For student who apply to university, we will cover the cost of the UCAS application fee – Currently £28.95 Please note Free School Meal recipients do not have to pay this fee on application.

Discretionary Bursary: Are you eligible?

Most students applying for a bursary will fall into this category. The Bursary Fund supports students with the additional costs of remaining in education, such as travel, course materials, equipment, course related trips, and travel to universities for open days, interviews, and offer holder days. These are items the student would otherwise need to pay for to participate in their education.

To be eligible for this funding, students need to:

- Be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31st August 2026
Or
 - Be aged 19 and continuing a course you began aged 16-18 or you have a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
 - Studying a course at the Trust funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
 - Have lived in the UK for 3 years prior to the start of your course
 - Be in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit
 - support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Or
- If your household income is below **£35,000 per year (gross)**. This does not include any siblings' incomes, unless they are your guardian/carer.

Discretionary Bursary: What evidence do you need?

If you are eligible to apply for a Discretionary Bursary, you must be able to provide us with at least one of the types of evidence below:

Eligibility	Evidence Type
You or your parents /carers are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits: • Working Tax Credit with a gross income of no more than £35,000 per annum • Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance • Employment & Support Allowance • Disability Living Allowance • Income Support • Child Tax Credit • Pension Credits • Universal Credit	A letter / Award notice confirming your entitlement to benefits from one of the following: • Job Centre Plus • Department of Work & Pensions • Your Local Authority • Tax Credit Award Letter – Must provide the full award letter (Issued March 2026 / or August 2026 which shows your income – all Pages) • Universal Credit – must provide all the pages of the 3 most recent Universal Credit statements Any letter provided must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit(s) and this must match the address we hold for the student.
If your parents/carers are not in receipt of one of the benefits listed above, but are employed or self-employed with a gross income of no more than £35,000 per annum	We need one of the following for each working parent/carer which shows the total household income • The most recent 3 months' pay slips • P60 for the 2025/26 tax year • Evidence of self-employed income – e.g. tax return

Please note – if you live between two homes, you should apply for a bursary based on the household you live in for **the majority of the time**. The address on your bursary application and evidence **must** match the address we hold for you on the College/School system.

Discretionary Bursary: What does it cover?

If you are eligible to apply for a Discretionary Bursary, FLT will seek to support you with the following costs:

Travel	If you live more than 1 hour away by bus, and need to travel by tube or trains as this is a more effective method of transport to the Trsut then we will contribute towards these costs.
Contribution towards Free Meals (If not already in receipt of Free Meals in Education)	£6.00 per day that you are timetabled to be at College/School, redeemable in the Canteen via your ID card – This is based on assessment of need and therefore, not automatically awarded
General Stationery	Up to £20 credit allocated in the Autumn Term, with a further £20 in the Spring Term and £20 in the Summer Term to be used to purchase stationery from the College/School store in the Library.

Art Materials	Funds for Art materials, will be available for Art students and the amount will be notified at the award
Essential course related trips / Field Trips	Fund/part fund essential activities that are linked to chosen A level courses
Scientific Calculator (Casio FX-991CW) – Recommended by the Mathematics Department	The College/School will purchase and supply a Casio FX-991CW (recommended by the Mathematics Department) for students studying Maths, any of the sciences, Economics, Psychology & Sociology
Laptops	We will supply laptops to loan to students where a need is evident. The laptops will be loaned to students for the total duration of the course.
Books / Key Texts	Modern Foreign Languages (up to £12.00 per language in L6)
Visits to universities – Open days, interviews, holder days	We will support the travel costs of up to 3 visits per academic year to universities, only if it relates to your future progression plan. Capped at maximum of £240.00 (incl a Student Railcard) – to contribute towards the 3 visits.
UCAS Application Fee	For student who apply to university, we will cover the cost of the UCAS application fee – Currently £28.95 Please note Free College /School Meals recipients do not have to pay this fee on application.

Summary of Bursaries:

The table below shows the main differences between a Bursary for defined vulnerable groups and a Discretionary Bursary:

Costs	For defined vulnerable groups	Discretionary
Travel	✓ 40 minutes travel time	✓ 1 hour travel time
Support with College Meals	✓	✓
General Stationery	✓ £60.00 per year	✓ £60.00 per year
Art Materials	✓	✓
Course related Trips	✓	✓
Scientific Calculator	✓	✓
Laptops	✓ (Purchased)	✓ (Loaned)
Books / Key Texts	✓	✓
Visits to Universities	✓	✓
UCAS Application Fee	✓	✓

Please note:

Even if you are eligible for one of the above bursaries, the FLT has the right to refuse your application if you do not have any actual financial need. This may be because your financial needs are being met in another way, or because you have no educational-related costs to meet. No award is guaranteed, and all awards will be based on the FLT's assessment of your financial need.

Please note:

FLT attendance policy is based on a minimum attendance of 95% or above. If attendance falls below 95% the FLT reserves the right to withdraw elements or all bursary support.

Further information about payments – Costs we DO support

Travel

To receive support with travel costs you must:

- Travel over 40 minutes to attend the Trust by public transport (bursaries for defined vulnerable groups) OR
- Travel over 1 hour to attend the Trust by public transport (discretionary bursaries)

By means of assessment, if students are eligible for financial support and travel over 1hr by bus to get to the Trust (40 mins for students in the vulnerable group), FLT will support towards these travel costs, if it is more efficient to travel by tube/ train, and travel times are reduced.

If there are specific extenuating circumstances e.g., social disability, safety reasons, these will be assessed on a case by case basis at the time of application.

Distances and timings will be calculated from the Transport for London (TFL) [Plan a journey - Transport for London \(tfl.gov.uk\)](#)

ZIP Oyster Photocard

[16+ Zip Oyster photocard - Transport for London \(tfl.gov.uk\)](#)

16- & 17-year-old students **must** obtain a ZIP Oyster Photocard – which allows discounted travel or free travel on all the London transport services. The 16+ Zip Oyster photocard expires on 30th September in the year after a student's 18th birthday.

If a student does not live within a London Borough, they must still purchase this Oyster card as it allows 50% off adult fares on bus, tube, DLR, London Overground, Elizabeth line, and most National Rail services in London

If a student lives in London, then free travel is available on buses and trams. 50% off adult fares would still apply on tube, DLR, London Overground, Elizabeth Line and most National Rail services in London.

If you are over 18, in full-time education and live in a London borough, you may be eligible for an 18+ Student Oyster Photocard

[18+ Student Oyster photocard - Transport for London \(tfl.gov.uk\)](#)

'Pay as you go' fares are not discounted

30% discounts apply on adult-rate travelcards, bus & tram pass season tickets

We will not fund travel for students who do not meet the travel distance threshold, unless there are exceptional or medical circumstances, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Please note, the actual award given for travel may not cover 100% of your costs.

Support for travel is assessed automatically at the point of application and students do not need to provide additional evidence for this, unless you are applying on the grounds of exceptional or medical circumstances.

Travel will be paid to students every four weeks, based on 95% or above 'present' attendance
Extenuating circumstances, due to illness, or injury, will be paid at the discretion of the Trust.

Meals in Education

Students not eligible for the Free Meals in Education Scheme may receive a discretionary allowance amount from the Bursary Fund, if sufficient funds are available.

If a student's needs have been assessed, and are awarded fully funded or part funded Meals, they will be provided with an amount, to be confirmed at the time of the award, per timetabled day to spend in the College/School canteen. This will be confidentially loaded on to the student's ID card, which can then be used as a cashless payment method. Eligibility for support towards Meals is assessed automatically at the point of application and our decision is based on the evidence supplied with the application.

Art Materials

Art Materials will be supplied by the Art Department. Further Art Materials will be supported by the bursary fund if available and there is a need. This is not assessed automatically, and students must highlight a need if required.

Stationery

Each term, bursary students will receive £20.00 credit, to purchase stationery at the College/School Stationery store in the Library.

All students receive £2.00 worth of print credits at the beginning of their first year.

More print credits can be purchased from the library using the bursary stationery allowance.

Essential Course related trips / Field Trips

For trips linked to a specific course, that take place within the UK, FLT will cover the specified trip costs either fully or partially (dependant on funds available). Support for trips is not assessed automatically.

Students will need to contact us each time an opportunity arises to participate in a trip.

These could include: Geography field trips, trips to the Theatre, Museums & Galleries. The trip must be relevant to your course of study for us to support financially.

Scientific Calculator

Support for a calculator is **not assessed automatically**. Students studying Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Economics, Sociology and Psychology must request it. If the need has been assessed and granted, we will then provide them with a scientific calculator. The Casio FX-991CW is recommended by the Mathematics Department.

If for any reason this calculator is not suitable for a need, due to special circumstances, please let us know and we can assess on a case-by-case basis and purchase an alternative one to meet a students' specific need.

Laptops

Laptops are available to loan to those eligible *bursary* students who do not have their own or suitable laptop to work on to study for their A-Levels. This will be assessed automatically at the point of application. If a bursary student's circumstances change during the year, then they can come and speak to one of the Bursary team who may be able to loan a device.

Books / Key Texts

Modern Foreign languages:

Up to £12.00 per language in L6. These books are only required to be purchased once at the beginning of L6 and will last for the two years, so will only be issued once during the student's course.

Visits to Universities

We may support students with travel costs to attend University Open Days, interviews, and offer days, where there is a clear link with the student's future progression plan. Maximum of 3 visits per academic year.

When deciding whether we can support a request, we will consider whether the trip is compulsory or optional, whether the university offers financial support for this purpose and whether there is a viable alternative, such as taking part virtually.

This is subject to the availability of the Bursary Fund at the time. Any contribution that we make must be agreed before a student attends the university, we will not consider retrospective claims. Students must let the Bursary Team know at least 2 weeks before the visit.

The amount awarded will be calculated using the cheapest form of public transport to the destination and will take all available travel discounts into account. We will not pay for overnight accommodation costs associated with these visits' and can only support the costs of the student, not those of anybody travelling with them.

Support under this category is not assessed automatically and students will need to contact us if this cost arises.

Compulsory Admissions Examinations

Some universities courses require an admissions test as part of their application process, for example, the LNAT for Law courses, or the UKCAT for some Medicine courses. Many of these costs are waived for students receiving a bursary by the Universities. However, if a student does not meet the criteria for this, then we will support bursary students with this fee, either partially or fully, depending on the funds available.

UCAS Application Fee

The cost of applying to higher education via UCAS is £28.95.

It is very important that students budget for this in advanced of making an application, as this fee will be paid using a debit card and we are unable to pay it to UCAS on students' behalf. Bursary students can send us a copy of the receipt, and we will reimburse this.

Free Meals Students do not have to pay this fee and must tick the FCM box on the application.

Further information about payments – Costs we *do NOT* support

The following provides information about the costs the bursary does NOT cover, and why:

Exam re-sits - We are unable to support students with the cost of exam re-sits.

Enrichment or extra-curricular activities - We are unable to support the cost of any enrichment activities which are not a compulsory part of a course you are studying. FLT offers a wide range of enrichment activities and tries to ensure there are always options with zero costs to meet.

General living costs - The bursary will not cover general living expenses, such as a mobile phone bill, accommodation utility bills, etc.

Additional Information - FLT Hardship Fund

If a student has a specific one-off cost that they need financial support with, that is not covered by the Bursary Fund or for a student who is not eligible for the 16-19 Bursary, please speak with the Bursary Officer who will put your request to senior management, for approval. For exceptional cases, FLT can use its own funds to support a student with exceptional circumstances.

How to Apply:

The application process for both types of Bursary and for the 'Free Meals in Education', is the same.

- You need to apply online, via an online portal
- The online portal is available on this link:

[Frontier Learning Trust Student Financial Assistance \(paymystudent.com\)](https://paymystudent.com)

- You should apply as soon as possible (once enrolled)

Important:

- Make sure you know your student ID number (shown on your ID card) and college email address.
- If you have any problems accessing your College/School email account, please contact the IT department (located on the first floor of the Millenium Building), before attempting to apply for a bursary
- You (student) need to have your own bank account. We cannot make payments to your parents/carers or any other third party. The account must be in your name.
- Complete each section of the online application form carefully – answer all the questions. We can only process completed applications. Please remember to sign the completed form
- You will need to upload electronic copies of the required evidence. Do **NOT** send us anything by post or email unless we ask you to. Only evidence submitted via the portal is correctly attached to your application.
- Submit the bursary application by the deadline date **FRIDAY 18th SEPTEMBER 2026**. Application forms can be submitted later in the academic year, but there may be delays in processing and confirming eligibility.
- If your circumstances change during the year, you can apply for a bursary, but payments cannot be back dated, and the bursary will only commence from the date of submitting the application.
- If you have any queries, please email:
 - bursary@woodhouse.ac.uk for Woodhouse students
 - office@imperialmathsschool.ac.uk. For Imperial Maths School student

When to Apply:

- The deadline for applications is **Friday 18th September 2026**. The processing of applications received after this date will be at the FLT's discretion.
- Travel Payments may be backdated. Applications received after the deadline, will not be subject to any back payments, and any award offered will be calculated from the date of your application.

If a student finds themselves in financial hardship after the deadline, they should still contact the bursary office, as we will always help if we can.

What happens after an application is made?

- All applications are assessed by the Bursary Officer.
- Remember, we can only process completed applications that include the required evidence.
- If your application is incomplete, we will contact you via your College/School email to let you know what we need.
- All decisions are emailed to your College/School email. We aim to let you know the outcome of your application within 15 working days.

If a bursary is awarded: the email we send will let you know how much you have been awarded, what the award is for, how and when the payments will be made. You will also receive information about any conditions on your award, for example, our attendance expectations.

If a bursary is refused: the email, we send will explain why. The most common reasons are: not having the correct evidence, the evidence not meeting the requirements or submitting an incomplete.