



STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FUNDING POLICY 2026-27 (Bursaries)

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Student Financial Support Funding Policy 2026-27 (Bursaries)

INTRODUCTION

Orchard Hill College (OHC) is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our students.

This policy sets out arrangements for how Orchard Hill College will operate the 16-19, 19+ Discretionary and Vulnerable Bursary Fund and Free Meals Fund. Arrangements are based on Department for Education (DfE) and Greater London Authority (GLA) and (ASF) Adult Skills Fund guidance.

WHAT IS THE BURSARY FUND?

The Bursary Fund is a scheme set up by the Department for Education (DfE) and funded by both DfE and GLA/ASF. The Fund provides financial support to eligible students to help overcome their specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education and training.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

There are three types of bursary: discretionary bursary, vulnerable bursary and free meals fund. Each bursary will have its own eligibility criteria, some of which are listed below:

- Be aged over 16 and under 19 as of 31 August in the enrolling academic year.
- Be a current and attending student at OHC
- Over 19+ up to the age of 24 with an EHCP
- Over 19+ without an EHCP.
- Have been a resident in the UK or EEA for three years preceding 31 August in the enrolling academic year.
- Meet one of the following eligibility criteria (benefits can be in a parent/carer or student's name):
 - Income support
 - Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
 - Employment Support Allowance (income related)
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guarantee element of State Pension Credits
 - Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) that does not exceed £16,190
 - Universal credit

- In Local Authority care
- Low Household income (less than £40,000 pa)
- Temporary financial hardship or change in circumstances

For further clarification, refer to the college Financial Guidance Support provided with the college enrolment pack or the college website <https://orchardhill.ac.uk/>.

If you do not fall into any of the categories above but are still in need of assistance, please talk to our Bursary team and we will endeavor to help where possible.

To be eligible for the vulnerable bursary, students must meet the above criteria and fall into one of the following categories:

- Be a looked after child (LAC).
- Be a care leaver.
- Be receiving income Support, or Universal Credit 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.
- Be receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.
- Be under the age of 19 years old, as of 31st August in the enrolling academic year.

HOW IS THE BURSARY FUND ALLOCATED?

Free Meals Fund

Similar to the two Bursary Funds, Free Meals is awarded to provide free meals for disadvantaged students. Due to the centre locations, student dietary requirements and as the College sites do not have direct access to their own canteen facilities, this award will be provided through cash payments, voucher schemes or similar at the discretion of OHC.

Discretionary Bursary

Discretionary Bursaries are awards made to students by the College to help overcome the individual financial barriers to participating in education, for example help with:

- Travel
- Educational visits – essential to programme of study.
- Books and equipment
- Specialist clothing e.g. work-related clothing
- Footwear and clothing at discretion & assessment only
- Specialist equipment
- Free Meals top up
- Exceptional hardship arising from unforeseen circumstances

Funding for the Discretionary Bursary is received directly by the College from the DfE/GLA/ASF. The allocation process for these funds is as follows:

- Students that apply will be assessed individually against the criteria and will be awarded a bursary fund based on their actual financial need.
- Any unspent discretionary funding from the previous academic year will be prioritised for students based on their actual financial need in the current

- academic year.
- Some funding will be held back for a contingency for students whose personal circumstances may change.
- 5% of the discretionary fund will be held back to cover administrative costs.

Vulnerable Bursary

The Vulnerable Bursary Fund is designed to help support young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participate in education or training.

In order to apply for the Vulnerable Bursary, the College must submit a Funding Claim form to the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) once an eligible young person is identified. The Student Bursary Support Service, part of the DfE/GLA/ASF, will then issue funds directly to the College.

Applications must be supported by appropriate evidence, such as:

- A letter from the DWP setting out the benefit the young person is entitled to, confirming that the terms of their benefit entitlement allow them to participate in further education or training.
- Written confirmation of the young person's current or previous looked-after status from the Local Authority which looks after them or provides their leaving care services.

Eligible students must meet the criteria of the funding body and vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to funding. Students can apply for a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications to the bursary fund must be made through the College's online portal (Pay My Student). Guidance, supporting documentation and terms & conditions can be found on Pay My Student, enrolment packs and the College website.

Evidence of eligibility is required to be uploaded to the Pay My Student portal for all applications. **Note:** The submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

The College will notify students of the outcome of their application in writing.

Note: The College cannot accept responsibility for late submission of applications. Applications will not routinely be backdated beyond the term in which they are received. Exceptions may only be considered where there is sufficient evidence to justify the delay.

Conditions for receipt of student bursaries

Eligibility for vulnerable student bursaries, discretionary bursaries, and the free meals fund is conditional upon students meeting the eligibility criteria, and in accordance with the requirements set by external funding bodies and the OHC Student Financial Support Funding Policy.

All bursary payments are subject to students attending and actively engaging with their College programme. Behaviour is considered and in accordance with the Inclusive

Trauma Informed Positive Behaviour Support and Restraint Reduction Policy. Part-day attendance may be considered under exceptional or extenuating circumstances at the College's discretion

Assessment and approval of application

Each application with supporting documentation will be assessed in strictest confidence in line with DfE/GLA/ASF guidance.

All discretionary fund payments with the exception of free college meals will be subject to review and approval by a representative of the College Senior Leadership Team (SLT). All decisions will be made through a panel meeting consisting of no less than three staff members (inclusive of SLT).

The College will review the policy and low income bands prior to the start of each academic year, so that we can continue to provide support to our students in a fluctuating and vulnerable global and national economic environment.

Giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds recovered. This could potentially lead to the student and/or family facing prosecution.

High value equipment

We may be able to help with the cost of high-value equipment such as laptops, cameras and tablets where students require them to successfully complete their programme. This will be dependent on the budget available. Decisions regarding equipment will be made at Panel meetings with a member of SLT.

In special circumstances, and at the discretion of the College SLT, some students may be allowed to retain their equipment at the end of the programme, where a particular need has been identified. For students where this does not apply, they must return the equipment at the end of their programme.

The College is unable to provide receipts for any equipment purchased but is able to provide confirmation of purchase on request, to assist with insurance and servicing purposes.

The College accepts no responsibility for the damage or loss of any equipment. Any repairs, replacement or insurance for these items will be the responsibility of the individual student.

By accepting equipment provided through bursary, you agree to follow the College IT Policy and bursary terms and conditions, which can be accessed on the college website.

Use the following link to access the IT policy: [IT-policy-easy-read.pdf](#).

TRANSPORT

Bursary funding does not replace the statutory duty of Local Authorities to provide

transport.

Where transport support is awarded through the bursary, it will be based on the most cost-effective and reasonable option available.

PAYMENT

Vulnerable and discretionary bursary payments will be made to eligible students. using a BACS transfer for payment to the student's nominated bank account.

Please note: Students will need to have a current bank account. If the payment is to be made payable to someone other than the student, proof of Power of Attorney must be provided.

USE OF BURSARY AND AWARDS CONDITIONS

Students must only spend bursary funds on items that have been approved for support. Receipts or evidence of purchase must be provided upon request.

The level of support available through the Discretionary Bursary is dependent on the funding allocated to the College by the DfE/GLA/ASF, as well as the number of applications received.

The College may:

- Provide financial awards for approved expenditure, or
- Supply goods and services directly, the value of which will be deducted from the total bursary award

Bursary awards will be reviewed throughout the academic year to ensure priority is given to essential needs such as:

- Free School Meals (FSM) top-up
- Travel
- Essential equipment
- Hardship

Discretionary payments for additional support, which are reviewed and issued termly, are not guaranteed for the full academic year. Awards may be adjusted or withdrawn where projected spend exceeds the available funding allocation.

The College will maintain secure records of all applications, awards, receipts, and payments for audit purposes, in line with statutory financial regulations. These records will be retained for a period of six years. Please refer to the College GDPR statements/data protection policy which can be found on the college website or using the following link: <https://orchardhill.ac.uk/> .

An annual report detailing the number and total value of bursary awards will be produced.

APPEALS

If a young person or their parent/carer are not satisfied with the outcome of their application, they should appeal in writing to the Principal of the College within 10 working days, stating the reasons why. The Principal of the College will review the application within 15 working days of receiving the appeal. In the absence of the Principal, the case may be referred to the Executive Principal/CEO.

The decision of the College Principal is final and will be given in writing within 10 working days of their decision.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTATION

OHC&AT Financial Regulations and annexes