

# 16-19 STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT CONDITIONS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE



**If unable to attend lessons students should inform the school as soon as possible on 01244 683935**

## **Introduction**

The Government is continuing to provide the discretionary Student Financial Support funding (formally known as the Bursary Fund) to help 16 to 19 year-olds continue in full-time education, where they might otherwise struggle for financial reasons. Student Financial Support is intended to cover the costs incurred through attendance in education, and may be awarded for the purchase of books, meals, transport, UCAS fees or other expenses incurred, at the discretion of the school. If you have any queries regarding this process, please contact the staff at Christleton International Studio

All Student Financial Support award payments will be subject to the student's satisfactory attendance, behaviour and attainment. 100% attendance will be expected unless acceptable reason(s) are provided for it falling lower. Student Financial Support payments will be weighted 50% on attendance and 50% on behaviour/attainment. Students will be notified of any deductions and the reason(s) behind them and have the right to appeal against them through the usual appeal channels if they feel they have been unfairly treated.

Please note that Year 13 Student Financial Support Fund payments are only payable until the date of the student's final external examination.

## INITIAL APPLICATIONS

In order to qualify for Student Financial Support payments students need to be resident in England and aged between 16 and 19. If students do not qualify under these conditions they may apply for Discretionary Learner Support, or Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for students who are resident in Wales (see [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

The criteria for discretionary awards have been agreed and are consistent with past years, consisting of three priority levels plus an additional level of funding for transport as follows:-

**Band 1:** You can receive a bursary of £1,200 a year if the following apply:

- If you are in care or a care leaver
- You receive Income Support or Universal Credit (in your own name)
- You receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (in your own name as well as either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in place of ESA)
- You receive either Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (in your own name)

**Band 2:** A discretionary payment of up to £600.00 per year (amount to be confirmed October 2018) for those students who are in receipt of Free School Meals. For further information on eligibility for Free School Meals please [see](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/school-meals.aspx) <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/school-meals.aspx>

**Band 3:** A discretionary payment of up to £300 for students not entitled to Free School Meals but whose household is in receipt of Tax Credits or Universal Credit.

**Band 4:** A discretionary payment of up to £200.00 per year (amount to be confirmed October 2018) for students from families who require financial support for **transport** to school and who qualified for transport assistance in year 11 or would qualify under the current local government criteria for those aged up to 16:

- The distance to school from home is three or more miles
- The student cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of motility problems or health and safety issues related to their Special Educational needs or disability
- The nature of the route to school is such that the student cannot be expected to walk it

Payments will be made in ten monthly instalments (ie for September to June) in arrears by the school and will also be made subject to available funds following the payments to those recipients who qualify for the £1,200 Student Financial Support.

If you believe you qualify for the Student Financial Support scheme please ask staff for details on how to apply.

The school will endeavour to assess all applications received at the earliest opportunity. Verifying the eligibility of all applicants is an integral feature of the assessment process.

**For Band 1** applicants this will entail obtaining original documentation from applicants setting out the benefits they receive or written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the Local Authority which looks after them or provides their leaving care needs.

**Band 2** verification can be achieved without student involvement as the Local Authority provides the school with confirmation of all students granted Free School Meals.

**The Band 3 & 4** assessment process is likely to take slightly longer as proof of eligibility will be required. The type of evidence required in order to verify household income and receipt of Tax Credits will include Tax Credit Award Notices, P60s / evidence of self-employed income. Please send copies of this evidence with your application.

Deliberate understatements of income may result in payments being stopped, reclaimed and if necessary reported to the Police as an incidence of fraud.

Given the limited nature of Student Financial Support funding provided to the School by the Government, the level of support for Band 3 and 4 can only be finalised and confirmed once the initial Band 1 and 2 award commitments are known.

## **BEHAVIOUR**

Payments of Student Financial Support will be reduced if student behaviour and effort is not considered to be satisfactory. Subject teachers award scores for effort on SIMS and scores of 3 or more will result in a reduction in payment. Students can appeal against decisions to reduce payments as described below.

## **ATTENDANCE**

1. In some circumstances the school can treat absence as authorised. In these circumstances a student will still be entitled to the weekly Student Financial Support payment as though he/she has attended in full (unless, of course, they have an unauthorised absence for a different lesson).

2. If an absence can be foreseen then the student should request authorisation of absence in advance.
3. Any unforeseen absences should be notified to the school on **01244 683935** as soon as possible.
4. The decision to treat an absence as authorised will take account of the guidance under the Student Financial Support scheme made by the Secretary of State, which state that a school will consider:
  - Treat all absences as **unauthorised**, unless there is a valid reason otherwise.
  - Whether or not authorised absence was applied for in advance.
  - Whether the absence was really unavoidable.
  - Whether the student notified the school as soon as possible of the absence.
5. Absences will only be authorised in advance for unavoidable reasons. Decisions as to whether to authorise an absence will consider the inherent reasonableness of any case; the number of absences taken by any one individual; repetitions of the same excuse; and whether the excuse is backed up with evidence. The following examples, which are not exhaustive, are deemed valid:
  - (a) A medical appointment, which cannot be arranged outside school hours.
  - (b) To look after a family member or another person for whom the student has caring responsibilities. However, the school cannot regularly authorise absences for a student for this reason. Where such responsibilities are regularly interrupting attendance patterns, there is a need to explore solutions personally with the student.
  - (c) A religious holiday.
  - (d) A visit to a University either to attend an open day or for interview; or a career related interview
  - (e) An appointment with a Careers Advisor (although these should normally be scheduled to avoid disruption to studies)
  - (f) Work experience placement, which is an integral part of a course, and for which the student does not receive a wage
  - (g) Participating in a significant extra-curricular activity, such as drama, music, sport or volunteering. Authorised absence will only be granted where the activity reflects a significant level of personal achievement (for example, a regional or national event), or for a one-off event. Authorised absences under this criterion will be granted sparingly; where frequent participation in such activities is proposed, there is a need to explore other solutions personally with the student

- (h) Attendance at a probation meeting
- (i) Attendance at a funeral
- (j) Severe disruption to a student's mode of transport.
- (k) A driving test.
- (l) A school or School representatives' meeting (e.g. Governors' meeting).

6. The following reasons for absence would *not* generally be acceptable:

- (a) Holidays
- (b) Part or full time work which is not part of the student's programme of study
- (c) Leisure activities
- (d) Birthdays or similar celebrations
- (e) Babysitting younger siblings
- (f) Shopping
- (g) Driving lessons

7. Where an absence genuinely could not be foreseen in advance, the student must make arrangements to tell the school as soon as possible, and at the latest by the end of the same day. Failure to do this means the absence will not be treated as authorised, and the Student Financial Support will not be paid for that week.

8. The only exception to the principle in paragraph 7 is where the young person can supply a strong reason why they failed to contact the School. This might be because an event has been particularly disturbing or unpleasant, or because there has been a genuine practical barrier.

9. The following are examples of reasons for absence, which would tend to be acceptable, provided that the school is notified on the day:

- An emergency situation involving a family member or person for whom the student has caring responsibilities. Such cases will be treated sympathetically

on a one-off-basis, but are not acceptable as regular grounds for authorising absence.

- Transport problems that were not known about in advance and where there is no alternative available. The guidelines suggest that it is reasonable to expect students to walk up to three miles if they do not have a relevant disability.

10. In general, isolated periods of genuine sickness *need not* preclude payment of Student Financial Support. However, the Fund is intended to cover the costs incurred through attendance in education, so it should not be paid if a student is away for a full week. In addition, the school is entitled to refuse applications for authorised sickness absence if they have reason to doubt their validity. Clearly an emerging pattern of non-attendance due to sickness without explanation would be unacceptable. The school will not automatically accept sickness as a reason for authorised absence.
11. To qualify for payments, students must attend all lessons, not just registration. Attendance will therefore be monitored in lessons as well as at registration.
12. Students will receive their monthly payment during periods of authorised study leave preceding examinations until they have sat their final examination.
13. The school will issue a general authorisation of absence in some circumstances – for example, severe weather.
14. Payments are normally authorised on the first week of the month for the preceding month, if for any reason a payment has not been authorised students will be notified.

## **APPEALS PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS APPLYING FOR, OR IN RECEIPT OF STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT PAYMENTS**

Students have the right of appeal in two circumstances:

1. Appeals against the initial Student Financial Support entitlement decision. This might be regarding the level of entitlement awarded or might concern a student who has not been awarded a Student Financial Support at all.
2. Appeals against Attendance decisions taken by the School.

**Appeal Stage 1:** Query reason for decision with Staff, **time limit:** within two weeks of the date

Where the School has taken a decision that a student is not entitled to receive a payment, the student should contact school staff within two weeks of the date the decision was advised and ask for a reason as to why payment has been stopped or unauthorised.

This guide provides comprehensive guidelines about requirements to qualify for Student Financial Support payments; therefore the reason for the decision made will be an explanation of the rule(s) applied in this case. The explanation given may therefore be nothing more than a simple statement of fact.

**Appeal Stage 2:** Written appeal to Principal, **time limit:** within three weeks of the date

Should a student be dissatisfied with the explanation given by the staff, he/she may make an appeal in writing to the Principal (within three weeks of the date the decision was advised) who will handle the appeal from then on.

**Appeal Stage 3:** Hearing with Principal, **time limit:** within five weeks of the date

If on review the decision still stands, the student will be invited to an Appeals hearing with the Principal (within five weeks of the date the decision was advised) where his/her written case will be considered at which he/she may have his parent/guardian present as an adviser. All appeals will be conducted and completed within six weeks of the date of submission. One appeal hearing will be allowed for each decision.

**Appeal Stage 4:** Principal passes case to the Education Funding Agency - EFA, **time limit:** EFA discretion

The EFA will complete the appeal process and return a final decision. This is the final stage in the process for any complaints with the EFA. If you're unhappy, you can complain to the [Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#) through your local MP.

**The application of this guidance is a matter for the school in operating these principles; the school will ensure that decision making processes are transparent, and that all Student Financial Support applicants are treated equally. Further information Student Financial Support available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). 16-19 Student Financial Support Funding.**