



Full name of Policy / Statement	SMC Bursary Fund / Free Meals 2020/2021
Name of person(s) responsible	Mrs I Lakhi / Miss K Hollern

BURSARY FUND POLICY STATEMENT

The Bursary Fund is to help support those learners who face the greatest barriers to continue in education and to ensure every young person participates in and benefits from a place in 16-19 education. This Policy sets out the arrangements for how St Mary's College will prioritise and administer the 16-19 Bursary Fund in 2020/2021. It is the aim of the College to use funds to maximise the impact on recruitment, attendance, retention, achievement and success rates.

What is the Bursary Fund?

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is designed to help support young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participation in education or training. The Bursary is means tested and claims can be made at any time for the following (whilst full payment is not guaranteed, each request will be carefully considered):

- transport costs
- books and equipment,
- trips / university visits
- photocopying/printing credits
- meals
- equipment
- re-sit exam fees
- other College related activities and items

The fund is split into 2 parts:-

1. Vulnerable Bursary

A Vulnerable Bursary is available to learners who fall into one of the vulnerable groups identified below and are eligible to receive an award of up to £1,200 per year:

- learners in care
- care leavers - young people aged 16 and 17 who were 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
- learner who is aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods of 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16
- learner in receipt of 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

- learner in receipt of 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 (Child Benefit to parent will cease if learner successfully applies for Employment Support Allowance)

***Although a young person may be eligible for the bursary because they are in one of the defined vulnerable groups, bursary will only be granted if there is an actual financial need.*

Evidence of eligibility for Vulnerable Bursaries:

- learners who are in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority
- learners in receipt of Income Support, a copy of the Income Support award notice. Learner must be entitled to the benefit in their own right and the evidence must confirm that the learner can be in further education or training (some young people in receipt of benefits are not allowed to participate)
- learners in receipt of Universal Credit, a copy of the Universal Credit Award notice. Learner must be entitled to the benefit in their own right and the evidence must confirm that the learner can be in further education or training. Learners must also provide additional documentation to confirm their independent status, for example a tenancy agreement in the learner's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bills etc.
- learners receiving Universal Credit/Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, a copy of the Universal Credit or ESA award from DWP (UC claimants will be able to print off details of their award from their journal). Evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment, must also be provided

There is a possibility of no award, or a limited award, of a bursary for vulnerable groups being the outcome of an application.

Income support is paid to young people such as teenage parents, young people with severe disabilities, teenagers living away from their parents, young people whose parents have died and unaccompanied asylum seeking children, where a financial need is established.

Learner awarded Universal Credit to pay for housing costs (in place of housing benefit) will not be eligible for a vulnerable bursary unless they are also receiving another eligible benefit.

2. Discretionary Bursaries

St Mary's college will then award bursaries to learners whose family's household income falls below **£18,000** per year. The award will be made in kind subject to meeting attendance and behaviour criteria. Payments for trips/exceptional costs to ensure participation in learning will considered on an individual basis – please see Mrs Lakhi for an award request form.

Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible to apply for the fund, the household income must fall below £18,000 and learners must meet the criteria detailed below:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 years of age at 31st August or
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August and continuing on a programme enrolled on aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')
- have been resident in the UK or EEA for three years preceding 31 August (verified before enrolment)
- be enrolled on a government funded course

How to apply?

- complete the 16-19 Bursary Fund application form answering all questions to avoid any delays in processing – forms can be downloaded from the College Website www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk
- submit your application form online before 30 October 2020 and email the required evidence to bursary@stmarysblackburn.ac.uk – applications received after this date may be considered but will not be backdated.

Evidence

All applications to access the 16-19 Bursary Fund must be supported by appropriate evidence as detailed on the application form. All evidence will be treated as confidential.

Learners in receipt of qualifying benefits – the evidence must confirm that the learner can be in further education or training.

What happens next?

- The Bursary Panel will test the application against the eligibility criteria and check the evidence and assess the need for funding. The Senior Safeguarding & Welfare Officer may discuss the application with the student if required.
- The Senior Safeguarding & Welfare Officer will notify students by email of the outcome of their application within 14 working days of receipt. However, in September the processing time may be longer as most applications are received at this time.
- Any application that requires special consideration will be discussed by the Bursary Fund Awards Committee (see membership), who will consider the application and decide the level of any award. This is normally completed within 4 weeks of the application.
- The Finance Officer/Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer will keep financial records of all awards made for a period of six years

Please note: Students will need to have their own current bank account.

Appeals Process

You have a right to appeal. If any learner or their parent/guardian is not satisfied with the outcome of their application, they should appeal in writing to the Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer (Mrs I Lakhi) within 10 working days stating fully their reasons why. The Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer will call a Bursary Fund Appeals Panel within 14 working days of receiving the appeal. Final decisions for appeals will be made by the Appeals Panel consisting of Miss Kelly Sharp (Head of Inclusion) and Miss K Hollern (Business Manager). The applicant will be informed of the panel's decision within 10 working days of that meeting. The panel's decision is final.

Confidentiality

Applications and supporting evidence will be confidential to the 16-19 Bursary Application Panel, and in the event of an appeal, the 16-19 Bursary Appeals Panel. The applications and supporting evidence will remain confidential during processing, payment and storage. If it is necessary to obtain additional information to reach a decision, the learner and/or their parent/ carer(s) will be told the reasons why this is necessary prior to sharing any information further.

Exceptional Circumstances

The Applications for learners who are eligible for government funding, but whose household income is in excess of the stated threshold and are experiencing financial difficulty due to a significant and unexpected change in personal circumstances during their time at College, may be considered for the Bursary Fund/emergency payments.

The Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer may, at her discretion, also award a Bursary to any learner who faces genuine financial barriers to staying on in education such as a young carer who is providing care to a sick or disabled relative.

The College will operate a contingency fund which will be used for one-off payments to help learners who are experiencing exceptionally challenging circumstances, attend school trips, interviews etc.

Learners may apply for the Bursary Fund anytime during the year if their circumstances change.

ABSENCE

Any awards will be subject to satisfactory attendance, punctuality, behaviour and progress in line with the College's Attendance Policy. Attendance below 93% may result in the bursary awards being removed or withheld.

HOLIDAYS IN COLLEGE TERM TIME

The College discourages taking time away from study for holidays during term time therefore holidays in college term time will be recorded as unauthorised.

FORMAL AGREEMENT

A student awarded a Guaranteed or Discretionary Bursary will sign an agreement with St Mary's College undertaking to meet the College's conditions, accepting the amount and basis on which it is to be paid.

DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Ifrana Lakhi (Bursary/Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer)
Catherine Willoughby (Attendance Officer)

Responsibilities:

1. The Senior Safeguarding and Welfare Officer and the Business Manager to formulate the College policy and procedure for distributing the Bursary Award Fund
2. To agree and confirm the criteria and formula for making standard awards
3. To agree discretionary awards on an individual basis

DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND APPEALS PANEL

Kelly Sharp (Head of Inclusion)
Katrina Hollern (Business Manager)

This Panel is responsible for hearing any appeals and to rule on the appropriateness of the original award decision, confirming or amending it as appropriate. Following this, the Senior Safeguarding & Welfare Officer will communicate the outcome of the appeal to the student by letter.

Free College Meals

In addition to the bursary fund, some students may be eligible for the free college meals. The College will fund the free meal to all eligible students via an electronic credit, voucher or BACS transfer to the value of £2.41 a day.

Learners who are off-site undertaking work placement or on educational visits may be offered cash at the discretion of the Senior Student Welfare Officer – please inform Mrs Lakhi prior to the event.

Eligibility

One of the following must apply:

- learners must be aged between 16 and 18 on 31 August to be eligible for free meals. Learners who turn 19 during their study programme will remain eligible for a free meal until the end of the academic year in which they turn 19.
- learners aged 19 or over at 31 August and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- learners aged 19 or over at 31 August and continuing on a programme enrolled on aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers').

In addition to the above, learners must have been a resident in the UK or EEA for three years preceding 31 August (verified before enrolment).

In addition, learners or their parents / carers must be entitled to one of the benefits listed below to qualify for the free meals:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- State Pension Credit (guarantee element)
- Child Tax Credit (provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

Universal Credit (self - employment) - Parents will need to provide evidence of:

- Universal Credit by providing their Universal Credit award letter
- Self - employment by providing a copy of their company registration and tax return form
- Monthly net earnings not exceeding the threshold - please complete the self-declaration form on the website

How to apply?

- complete the 16-19 Bursary Fund/Free Meals application answering all questions to avoid delays in processing – forms to be completed on the College Website www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk
- email the required proof to bursary@stmarysblackburn.ac.uk – please state student name and date of birth in the email
- applications received after 30 October will not be backdated for awards

Evidence

All applications for the Free Meal must be supported by appropriate evidence as detailed on the application form. Any applications found to have been made on false declarations or false evidence will be required to repay the entire Bursary award and disciplinary procedures will be applied.

Important Notes

The fund will be distributed in a consistent and fair way and in accordance with guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Learner eligibility will normally be determined through an income-related assessment together with an assessment of the actual need for support. Where possible and appropriate, awards will be calculated using a standard formula. This process will be managed by the Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer.

Where, in the view of the Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer, special circumstances apply, the application will be assessed and awards will be made where appropriate.

In cases where emergency help is required, support may be arranged by the Senior Safeguarding & Disciplinary Officer to reflect the immediate needs of the learner.

The budget for the Bursary Fund is limited: learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it. If demand exceeds the available funds, reduced awards may be given.

In its administration of the Bursary Fund, St Mary's College will not discriminate against learners on any basis as defined in current equalities legislation.

Learners enrolled on a two year course will need to re-apply for financial assistance at the beginning of the second year. Awards made in the second year may differ from first year awards.

All awards are dependent on the learners achieving and maintaining satisfactory progress and attendance in all of their classes and the Bursary will be withheld or withdrawn if deemed unsatisfactory.

If false or incomplete information is submitted, or if parents do not declare any part of their income that is relevant, it may result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the learner and/or their family facing prosecution.

The Senior Safeguarding & Welfare Officer may require updated evidence throughout the year.

Absence

Meals will only be funded on the days the learner is in College/Placement/Educational visit.

Care To Learn - Childcare support for young parents

Students aged 16-19 years of age who have parental responsibility can also access financial support for childcare through the Government funded Care to Learn scheme. Further details and how to apply can be found at <https://www.gov.co.uk/care-to-learn/how-to-claim>. Young parents are expected to access any entitlement they may have for 15 or 30 hours free childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds before applying for funding from Care to Learn. More information is available on the gov.uk website (<https://www.gov.uk/free-early-education>)

Contact

Mrs Lakhi

01254 580464

bursary@stmarysblackburn.ac.uk

NB. The college reserves the right to amend/update the application form/policy & procedures during the academic year