

## Financial Support/Free Meals in FE Policy

**Title:** Financial Support/Free Meals in FE Policy

**Date:** July 2020

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### Cross ref to other Policies

1. Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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2. Student Code of Conduct

3. Discipline and Behaviour Policy

### Publication:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Financial Support/Free Meals in FE Policy

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the 16 – 19 Student Bursary Fund/Free Meals in FE Fund is to:

- Provide financial support to students to help them to overcome specific, individual, financial barriers to learning, allowing them to remain in education.
- Provide free meals to disadvantaged students in further education.

### 2. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- The bursary is awarded on need, in-line with agreed standards of attendance and behaviour.
- Bursary rules are applied fairly and consistently and in-line with our commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Free meals are available to all eligible students.
- The application process is easily understood and accessible.
- The application process identifies eligible students in a timely manner.
- The funds are managed to maximise the resources available to those students who are most in need of financial support.

The Bursary is **not** used to promote Thomas Rotherham College.

### 3. SUPPORT

**Free Meals in FE Fund** – the College will offer a meal, free of charge, to all eligible students on each day they are required to attend their studies.

**16 – 19 Bursary Funds** - There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
- Discretionary bursaries

In-line with current guidance, the College will ensure that the funds go to those who genuinely need them, and support will be prioritised into the following categories:

- **Travel** to college
- **Free meals** (breakfast or lunch) from the College's catering service
- **Essential trips and visits**
- **Essential materials and equipment.** (These will remain the property of the College)
- Other expenses associated with study

### Care to Learn

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In addition to the 16-19 Bursary Fund/Free Meals in FE Fund, the College provides support for:

- 16-19 Childcare (through the Care to Learn scheme)

Young parents should apply directly to Care to Learn to access up to £160 per child, per week to help with the cost of childcare, registration fees, summer retainer fees and travel costs.

Information and guidance relating to the above is available from Student Services or [www.gov.uk/care-to-learn](http://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn).

### 4. ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

#### 16 - 19 Bursary/Free Meals in FE

**To be eligible students must be aged over 16 and under 19\* on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020**

*\*(Students aged 19+ are eligible if they have an Education Health Care Plan or are continuing a study programme started at age 16-18) Students aged 19+ are not eligible for a Vulnerable Bursar).*

**To ensure that funding reaches those students who are most in need, support is prioritised as follows:**

**Priority 1:** Vulnerable Students, who are defined as:

- In care (LAC) or Care Leavers
- In receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves
- In receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments (in their own right) as well as Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.
- Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking children aged under 18 (treated as LAC)

**Note:** Support for vulnerable students is not guaranteed - the College may consider that although a young person is eligible, they do not have financial need as they have no relevant costs, or their financial need is already being met by other agencies.

Where support has been agreed, it may not equate to £1200 but will reflect the level

of financial support required.

**Priority 2:** All students whose household income is below £16,190.

**Priority 3:** All students household income is below £30,000 – if it is not possible to offer a full package of support to this group, meals and transport costs will be the priority.

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### Free Meals in FE (addition information)

Transitional protections introduced during the roll out of Universal Credit mean that students already receiving free meals as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 will continue to be eligible for the 2020 – 2021 academic year.

### COVID-19 and Free Meals

Where students eligible for free meals are self-isolating due to Coronavirus or as a close contact of someone with the virus, the College will continue to provide support for meals. During periods of lockdown or whole college online learning, support will also continue. Assistance will be in the form of supermarket e-vouchers. These will be sent directly to the student's college email on a weekly basis.

### Application Deadlines

Priority 1 applications	no deadline
Priority 2 applications	first deadline 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2020

## 5. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

When assessing income, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments are disregarded. However, the element paid for mobility for a student, may be considered as income when assessing transport costs.

Students of sixth form age who previously received travel support via their Local Authority will need to reapply to the Local Authority in the first instance. Continuing post 16 learners' transport needs are reviewed on an annual basis. See Transport Policy Statement for Learners 16 – 19 in Further Education, available from Education Transport on 01709 822649 or email [education.transport@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:education.transport@rotherham.gov.uk) for more information.

Learners with limited mobility may be entitled to apply for a Disabled Persons Pass.

The Disabled Persons Pass allows free travel on bus, train and tram within South Yorkshire and some cross boundary services. More information is available on [travelsouthyorkshire.com](http://travelsouthyorkshire.com) or by calling Traveline on 01709 515151.

Students aged 19+ with an Education Health Care Plan may be supported with the cost of transport subject to the following conditions.

- The student is not entitled to LA support/Disabled Person's Pass.
- The student is not receiving support for transport costs from another source.
- The student cannot travel independently.

## 6. APPLYING FOR SUPPORT

Applications for 16 – 19 Bursary/Free Meals in FE must be made using the online

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application form.

A link to the form and a basic guide to eligibility and support is emailed and advertised to all students and parents/carers prior to the start of the academic year and periodically throughout.

All applications must have the relevant supporting documentary evidence included.

Students will be informed in writing of the outcome of their application.

No assistance will be paid to or on behalf of a learner until they are enrolled as a student at the College.

**Note: Funding is for one year.** Students must apply at the start of each academic year.

### 7. DEFINING HARDSHIP

All personal circumstances and any available information will be taken into consideration when establishing need. Applicants will be expected to investigate all avenues of support before applying to the Bursary Fund eg. Care to Learn, Tax Credits etc.

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### 8. ATTENDANCE & BEHAVIOUR CONDITIONS

#### Attendance:

Support from the Bursary Fund is conditional upon satisfactory overall attendance of at least 90%.

Unsatisfactory attendance (below 90%) will be investigated and support may be withdrawn.

Although an average of 90% attendance is regarded as satisfactory, the College may take into account all personal circumstances when determining satisfactory attendance, therefore, SLT, Pastoral Managers or Tutors may, in exceptional circumstances, present a case where they consider the attendance pattern to be 'satisfactory' and therefore eligible for support due to extenuating circumstances.

#### COVID-19 and Attendance

During periods of lockdown, self-isolation (as a close contact), or whole college online learning, the College monitors engagement in remote learning. Students who fail to engage without good reason/extenuating circumstances may have support withheld or withdrawn.

#### Behaviour:

Support from the Bursary Fund is conditional upon satisfactory behaviour. Students entering the formal stages of the disciplinary process may have their support withheld or withdrawn.

### 9. STUDENTS WHO WITHDRAW

If a student withdraws from their studies before completion, the College may request repayment of any previously allocated funds and/or the return of any items of equipment provided through the Bursary Fund.

### 10. INCOME ASSESSMENT & EVIDENCE

To qualify for support, students or parents/carers must provide the following evidence:

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### Priority 1: Vulnerable Student evidence:

A letter from DWP or documentation proving that the young person is in receipt of the qualifying benefit(s) listed under Section 4 above and confirming that they can participate in further education or training.

### Priority 2:

Appropriate evidence to show that household income is below £16,190.

### Priority 3:

Appropriate evidence to show that household income is below £30,000

### Free Meals in FE – transitional protection

Documentation, clearly stating the student's eligibility for **free school meals** as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018

## ELIGIBILITY

- Eligibility is determined by gross household income of the student, their partner, or parents/carers living at one address. Income of siblings and the student's personal part time earnings of up to £30 per week will be disregarded.
- Where there are **additional** dependant, children in the home (for whom Child Benefit is being paid), a deduction of £1,750 per child will be taken from the gross household income to give an adjusted gross household income. This will then be used to determine eligibility.

***(eg. a gross household income of £22,000 pa where there are two additional dependants (3 children in total) will take the adjusted gross income to £18,500 pa).***

- Where a student's living circumstances are unusual eg. living with a friend, grandparents or siblings, cases will be assessed individually.
- Accompanied Asylum Seeking Children may receive in-kind support (eg. books, equipment, travel provided their application has not been refused).

Students are required to inform Student Services of any change in their home/ financial circumstances. Occasionally it may be necessary to carry out eligibility checks where students are receiving continuous funding. If income is above the threshold, support may be withdrawn or reduced.

## Income Evidence



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Income will be assessed on current (net) salary and/or benefits into the household. Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments will be disregarded when assessing income; however, the element paid (to the student) for mobility may be considered as income when assessing transport costs.

Any relevant evidence available and dated within the last three months may be used, for example:

- Tax Credit Award Notification
- Letters from DWP/pension authorities/Job Centre
- Last 3 months' salary slips (if paid monthly)
- Last 4 weeks' wage slips (if paid weekly)
- Latest annual accounts for those who are self-employed

Where there is a significant change to household income during the academic year (eg. due to redundancy), and income falls to within the income thresholds listed, an application for support may be submitted.

Where a student or their parent/carer or partner is unwilling to provide evidence, no assessment can take place therefore, support will not be available.

Where a student is unable to provide the required evidence for legitimate reasons, an assessment will be made using any available evidence and taking into account the student/family circumstances.

Where a student lives with a parent/carer and a partner (not second parent) the total household income of both partners will be taken into account.

### 11. PAYMENTS & ALLOCATIONS

Payments will usually be made in the form of goods and services. In exceptional cases Hardship payments may be made by cash or cheque.

Payments are made in the following ways:

- For equipment and materials or trips, payments are made to a supplier/agent on the student's behalf.
- In respect of travel vouchers the full cost or a contribution is made to SYPT on the student's behalf.
- In respect of free meals, students will be issued with a Lunch Card. Students undertaking work placement will be given vouchers or (as an exception) cash.

### 12. APPEALS FOR ALL SCHEMES

Applicants refused support or whose support has been withdrawn due to breach of the 90% attendance at all subjects or behaviour issues, have the right of appeal. This appeal should be made using the Trust Complaints Procedure. The reason for

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appeal must be given and any supporting documentation or information must be provided.

### 13. VALIDATING THE SCHEME

Eligibility for support will be checked at the initial application stage.

It may be necessary to carry out eligibility checks where students are receiving continuous funding.

Attendance checks may be carried out to ensure eligibility for continued support.

Systems and procedures are in place to ensure that all funds are managed appropriately and effectively, and they are subject to both internal and external audit.

Any student found to have made a false claim for financial support, or anyone who disregards the conditions for assistance may be subject to the College's Disciplinary Procedure and a repayment of the funds will be sought. This may also result in a referral to the police and the possibility of prosecution for the student and/or their family.

Students must provide current (within the last three months) documentary evidence as required.

Where staff suspect that all is not in order eg. non-disclosure of income, tampering of evidence etc support will be withheld.

Payments may be refused, suspended or reclaimed where students fail to meet the conditions of assistance.

### 14. EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS OF SUPPORT

The success of financial support offered to students will be measured by analysing student retention and achievement.