



# Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

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## POST-16 BURSARY POLICY

Post-16 bursaries are funded by the ESFA. They are to provide financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation so that they can remain in education. There are two types of Post-16 bursaries:

1. Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 a year
2. Discretionary bursaries which are awarded to meet individual needs, for example help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.

Each student is assessed based on their individual needs and the bursary is to be used to fund specific items which support a student's study. Flat rate payments to students without consideration of individual need cannot be made as the bursary is designed to help students to overcome the individual financial barriers to participation that they face.

Bursaries are, in the first instance, payments in kind; for example purchasing books or bus passes for students. Sixth Forms are not able to make bursary fund payments as regular payments for living costs or as set monthly payments not linked to specific needs.

The bursary fund cannot be used for external services such as mentoring or to support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the student's study programme.

Students will continue on the bursary as long as they meet the requirements for attendance and behaviour that are set out for them. Payments will be stopped;

- 1) if they fail to meet these attendance & behaviour targets;
- 2) if students have been absent for a period of four continuous weeks or more;
- 3) when students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

When considering whether to stop payments, the Trust will also consider the impact on attendance of illness, caring responsibilities, and other exceptional circumstances.

If students receive equipment funded by the bursary before the end of December of Year 13, they will be allowed to keep the equipment for their further studies. If students receive the equipment from January of Year 13, they will be expected to return it to the Sixth Form when they complete Year 13. Should a student leave Sixth Form before the completion of their course, then they will be expected to return any equipment or course materials funded by the bursary.

### Vulnerable Groups Bursary

Students who meet the criteria, and have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. Identifying as one of the highlighted groups does not automatically entitle a student to a bursary. It may be that a student is a member of a defined group, but may not have a financial need; in this case no payment will be made. If there is a limited financial need then part of the bursary may be allocated to the student.

The defined groups are:

- In care
- Care leavers
- 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.
- 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.

*Please note that receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means tested benefits paid to families.*

*Students who are 19 or over are not eligible for the vulnerable bursary.*

Students need to provide proof that they are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable group. Sixth Forms will need to retain a copy of this documentation for their records.

This is as follows:

- For students in care or a care leaver - written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority
- For students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit - a copy of their Income Support or Universal Credit award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student's name.
- For students receiving Disability Living Allowance - a copy of their Universal Credit claim from DWP and evidence of the Disability Living Allowance.

The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a student participating on a study programme. As this bursary is based on financial need, financial checks will be carried out. Students who are in care will have their bursary allocation finalised in discussion with their allocated social worker.

Students will not necessarily receive an allocated amount linked to a specific time period. The Sixth Form in the first instance, will source materials etc as required, to allow the student to access their courses. Students can receive reimbursement where prior agreement has been made with the Sixth Form for materials to be purchased by them.

If a regular need is recognised, a student may receive a regular payment to address this specific need. This will only apply where it is not possible for the Sixth Form to source the support/materials required. All payments made to the student have to be paid into the student's bank account. Payments will be made at a set frequency, ie. weekly, monthly.

#### Discretionary Bursary

This type of bursary is to allow students to help overcome individual barriers to participation. This is designed to help with the cost of travel, to buy essential books, equipment or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls). These are items that the student would need to purchase in order to participate in the study programme. This bursary can be used for trips related to the programme of study and a student can claim either the total cost of the trip, or £500 to contribute towards the trip, if the overall cost exceeds this amount.

Although there is no cap for the amount a student can claim as part of the discretionary bursary, there is a limit to the amount of money available for the schools to issue to students. To ensure fairness in the distribution of the bursary, a nominal cap will be set at £1200. At this point, the student's bursary allocation will be reviewed before any more payments can be made from it.

Students are eligible for the Discretionary Bursary if their household income is below £27,500 and/or if there are other circumstances, such as distance to travel from the institution, the number of dependent children in the household or if a student is a young carer which would affect their ability to fund the costs as listed above. The Head of Sixth Form on each of the Trust sites has the ability to use their discretion to award bursary funds in the case of exceptional circumstances.

One of the following is required as proof of income:

1. *If a household receives Universal Credit, then three months' statements must be provided as evidence of income.*
2. *A copy of the most recent P60*
3. *A child tax credit statement*

#### Who is eligible?

- Students who have been legally resident in the UK for at least three years
- Students who are:
  - nationals of EU (or EEA) countries who are already living in the UK before UK exit from the EU
  - Students who are citizens of British Dependent Territories
  - Students whose parents have been endorsed to show they have right of abode in the UK
  - Students whose parents have been given leave to remain in the UK as per the ESFA funding guidance (available on request or from <https://bit.ly/2ZTAIqN>)
- Any students over 16, but under 19 on 31st August on the previous academic year will be eligible in the following academic year, for example if a student is this age on 31st August 2019 then they will be eligible for the academic 2019/20

**Students who are aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive the discretionary bursary. Students who are 19 are also only eligible if they are continuing on a study programme which began when they were aged 16-18, or have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).**

#### Bursary Restrictions

Under DFE guidance, Sixth Forms are not permitted to use the bursary funding in the following ways:

- Learning support such as counselling or mentoring
- Extra-curricular activities not essential to the student's study programme (this does not apply to the Duke of Edinburgh Award as this is part of a student's study programme and the Bursary will fund 50% or up to £500, of the costs of the expedition).
- Any aspect of educational support not directly linked to a bursary student
- Bonus payments to reward attendance or achievement
- Payments to support students' general living costs
- Making large or lump sum payments to students

#### How to Apply

To apply, students must complete the online application form which will be available on all Sixth Form/ School websites. Students need to re-apply at the start of each academic year. Students can apply at any point during the year but the initial deadline is 30th September for receipt by October half term.

All applications will take three weeks to process. Once the application has been approved, students will need to sign the bursary agreement before they can access bursary funds. All applications for items, or reimbursement through the bursary, will be completed via the online link given to students.

All information given in the application process will remain confidential.

#### Organisation and Appeals

The Bursary Administration team, with the guidance of the relevant Head of Sixth Form team, will be responsible for deciding who receives the awards based on the criteria listed in this policy.

The Bursary Fund is given to the Sixth Form every year by the ESFA (Education funding Agency). Once these monies have been allocated during the year, the Sixth Form will not be able to make any further grants until the new academic year.

Appeals relating to the bursary should be made to the Trust Finance Director, Alison Wyatt, in writing to the Trust PA [scrane@msnpartnership.com](mailto:scrane@msnpartnership.com).

