At a Glance:
Bursary & Free Meals Eligibility

Bursaries are made available to support **eligible students** aged 16-24 with an EHCP, particularly those from low-income households, by assisting in covering essential costs related to attending and participating in college life, including all compulsory elements of their study programme and accessing any external work placements.

The College can reassure students and carers that being in receipt of a bursary **does not affect the award** of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as IS, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or, generally, UC (please speak to the admissions team for clarification).

Vulnerable Bursary

(Given as a cash amount <u>up to</u> £1,200 for the year, usually paid monthly to students)

- Students must be **under 19** as at 31/8/2026 **and** have to be in **<u>one</u>** of the following defined vulnerable student categories:

1. In care*****
2. Care leavers
3. Receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) 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
4. Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

Please note this award is assessed on the basis of financial need and may not always be awarded in full.

*****Defined as: children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'.

This **does** also **include a young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority,** including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, as they are also classed as looked after.

This **does not** include any private fostering arrangements (i.e. direct arrangements made between the parent and a carer).

Foster carers' income **does not** need to be taken into account before awarding support, but the College must consider what costs may be covered by the local authority.

A 'care leaver' is defined as:

1. a young person aged 16 and 17 who was 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; or

2. a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 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

A young person who leaves care through a Special Guardianship Order is also considered a care leaver and eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups if they meet the full definition above.

Only students who meet this definition are eligible if they have a financial need.

Discretionary Bursary

(Payments may be given to support the purchase of equipment, transport, clothes and essential trips for college or items that are provided by college)

- All students eligible. Families need to provide evidence of income. Mainly for families with a household income below £38,000 but all applications will be looked at. Evidence of meeting the criteria must accompany the application such as:
  - P60 from the latest tax year (or the most recent three payslips)
  - Tax return from latest tax year (if any member of the household is self-employed) or an accountant's letter confirming annual income.
  - Award letter for any other benefits e.g. tax credits

- When calculating household income, we take into account all income and means-tested benefits, including, but not limited to:
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
  - Income Support
  - Pension Credit
  - Housing benefit
  - Council tax support
  - Social Fund
  - Universal Credit
  - Tax credits (Child and Working)
  - Child maintenance

  The College does not take into account non means-tested benefits, including:

  - Attendance allowance
  - Carer's allowance
  - Child Benefit
  - Disability Living Allowance
  - Personal Independence Payment
  - State Pension

Emergency food/meal support

The College has the flexibility to use the bursary fund in individual cases of severe hardship (a student considered to be in real need) for food/meal support on the days the student attends their study programme.

This type of arrangement is expected to be short term and on an individual basis.

Please contact admissions for details of how to administer this.

Free Meals in College

In the significant majority of cases this free meal will take the form of:

- Provision of a pre-ordered packed lunch
- A meal prepared and cooked as part of the daily routine
- Menu choice from the onsite catering facility where available

In **exceptional circumstances** payments may be made to students/carers where none of the above are suitable, or where there are other dietary requirements or challenges.

Only for students who are **in receipt of, or have parents in receipt of**, one or more of the following benefits**:**

- Universal Credit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit

All students will need to re-apply for 2026/2027 irrespective of their status in the previous year(s) whether at college or school.

The following documents are available in support of the process:

- Bursaries & Free Meals Application Form 2026-2027
- Bursaries and Free Meals Policy 2026-2027
- Bursary Information for Students 2026-2027
- Transport Policy 2026-2027

Key information is available on the College Website: Bursaries & Free Meals Policy - Homefield College or SharePoint: Bursaries and Free Meals Policy 2026-2027.pdf