

POLICY NOTE

THE ST MARY'S MUSIC SCHOOL (AIDED PLACES) (SCOTLAND) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2019

SSI 2019/144

1. The above instrument was made in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 73(f) and 74(1) of the Education Scotland Act 1980.
2. The instrument is subject to negative procedure.

Purpose of the instrument.

3. To revise the income levels which determine eligibility for financial assistance under the Aided Places Scheme, in order to reflect recent inflation, and also to increase the parental contribution made by those on the highest incomes. To make any other minor corrections considered appropriate at this time.

Policy Objectives

4. St Mary's Music School ('St Mary's') provides specialist musical tuition, alongside a general education, to musically gifted young people, selected on musical ability and potential. The Aided Places Scheme ('the Scheme') helps ensure that financial circumstances and background are not a barrier to entry. The Scheme currently provides financial assistance to 51 pupils attending St Mary's, and the St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 ('the 2015 Regulations') provide for the payment of allowances to reimburse St Mary's in respect of fees and charges remitted and grants made in operating the Scheme. The Scheme provides assistance in relation to the remission of tuition and boarding fees; as well as associated expenses by way of uniform and travel grants, meal allowances, and the remission of charges for field study courses. This is a means tested scheme which, in most cases, requires a contribution to be paid by the parents or legal guardians of pupils attending the school.
5. The St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2019 ('the 2019 Regulations') amend the basis on which parental contribution should be calculated, by altering the income levels which determine the level of assistance provided by the Scheme. The 2019 Regulations update the 2015 Regulations, which provide the legislative framework for the administration of the Scheme.
6. Existing income bands and monetary values have been updated in line with the Retail Price Index increase seen over the preceding two years (calculated using the figures at October 2017 and October 2018, resulting in an uplift of approximately 7.4%). These values have been increased on several occasions historically to ensure that parental contributions remain in proportion to continued increases in the costs of living, and will provide a modest reduction in parental contribution for those on lower incomes.
7. These adjustments affect the existing bands and monetary amounts used when calculating what assistance is available in respect of tuition and boarding fees, clothing grants, uniform grants, and additional fee relief for parents and guardians with more than one child at the school.
8. The amendments also introduce new higher income bands which will affect the calculation of assistance available where the parent or guardian of an attending pupil has income of £45,000 or greater. As a result, parents and guardians will be asked to make a

greater contribution to their fees from any income earned above £45,000. St Mary's supports this change to a more progressive calculation of assistance available under the Scheme. These higher bands are to be implemented in two stages, to allow those families affected to adjust to increased payments over a two year time frame.

9. The 2019 Regulations have also afforded the opportunity to make minor corrections to the 2015 Regulations. The amendments made by Regulations 2, 3 and 4 of the 2019 Regulations are intended to correct and clarify the 2015 Regulations, not to make substantive changes.

Consultation

10. There is no statutory obligation to consult in relation to the Scheme, however St Mary's has been consulted throughout the process and is in agreement with the proposed changes.

Impact Assessments

11. A Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment has not been completed as the changes do not impose any additional costs on St Mary's or any other organisation; there is no transfer of costs or benefits between organisations; and St Mary's agree to the changes and are comfortable that demand for their places will not be adversely affected.

12. A Child Rights and Wellbeing Assessment is not required as educational provision at St Mary's is additional to a child's statutory rights to education within the public sector; the amendments are not expected to have any detrimental impact; and the Aided Places Scheme continues to provide appropriate additional grants and meals for those pupils most in need.

13. Other impact assessments have been carefully considered, however given the limited scope of the amendments, the lack of substantive change to the text of the 2015 Regulations, and the modest financial impact, have not been deemed necessary.

Financial Effects

14. There is no expected financial impact on St Mary's, as the total fees remitted are not altered by the 2019 Regulations and demand for places is not expected to be affected.

15. Parents and guardians of pupils at St Mary's can expect to see their contribution to fees vary by a modest amount depending on their income level – less contribution will be required at lower income levels, however an increased contribution is required on income above £45,000. For example, a parent of a day pupil with income of £18,000 will see their contribution to tuition fees fall by £117 per year, while a parent of a day pupil with income of £80,000 will see their contribution increased by £384 per year from 2020.

16. There is unlikely to be a significant financial cost or benefit to the Scottish Government, as the reduction in parental contributions of those on lower incomes is likely to be offset by increased contributions from those on higher incomes. Even in the event that no higher contributions are collected, the estimated cost is less than £6,000 across all aided places, which would be accommodated within the Scottish Government Learning Directorate's budget.