



MEANS-TESTED BURSARY POLICY

Drafted by: Business Manager

Committee Responsible: Finance & Premises (RCh)

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Overview

The Sibford School Committee has a strong commitment to broadening access to the School by offering eligible parents/guardians financial support with the payment of school fees. A limited number of bursaries are awarded each year to pupils who would benefit from a Sibford School education but who are unable to afford the full fees. Bursaries are available to families of all religious denominations or none, but as funds are limited priority will be given to Quaker children.

Bursaries are intended to provide financial support for lower-income families so that their child may benefit from a Sibford School education. A bursary is means-tested, so the value of the bursary is relative to the financial resources of the pupil's family. A bursary is expressed as a percentage reduction applied to the standard day fee only and will reduce the termly bills proportionately.

Bursary awards are subject to annual testing of parental means. All Parents/guardians seeking a bursary are required to complete an application form which seeks to establish the financial circumstances of the household. Everyone with parental responsibility is required to complete a financial statement. Families must be able to demonstrate that they are already doing all they can to maximise their income and reduce their expenditure, so that the financial support from the School is in addition to their own efforts. Sibford School work with Bursary Administration Limited (BAL) who carry out a thorough review of each application including a home visit or face to face meeting as appropriate. This will involve an understanding of the motivation behind the application, the arrangements for any other children's education, the family situation, and the financial situation of the family.

A report on each application is provided by BAL and this is then considered by a Bursary Committee. The Bursary Committee consists of the Clerk or Assistant Clerk to School Committee, or the Treasurer, with the Head and Business Manager and the meetings of the Committee will be recorded and reported to Finance and Premises Sub Committee. Where appropriate, the Finance Officer and Admissions Officer may also be invited to attend.

Bursary awards are reviewed annually and existing bursary holders will be issued with repeat means-testing forms during of Spring term each year.

The School does not publish any details about bursaries awarded or which pupils have received financial support. The School respects the confidentiality of bursary awards made to families and recipients are expected to do likewise.

1. New Admissions Bursary Applications

Bursaries may be made available to parents/guardians of children alongside the prospective pupil successful completing the admissions process. (See the School's Admission's Policy). They are awarded at the discretion of the Bursary Committee, who are responsible for overseeing the management and coordination of the process.

Information on means tested bursaries is available via:

- The School prospectus
- The School website and social media
- The local press by means of advertisements.

Parents who consider that they will need bursary support should discuss this with the Admissions office at the earliest possible stage in their application for a place at the School.

As far as possible, all bursary applications will be considered together to promote a fair process.

Please note we do not combine bursaries with other financial discounts – where more than one remission is available the greater will be applied.

The Application Process.

Parents/guardians seeking a bursary are required to complete and submit a means tested bursary application form which seeks to establish the financial circumstances of the household, accompanied by full documentary evidence. The bursary application should be accompanied by a completed Sibford School Application form and Registration Fee.

The deadline for applications is 15th October for entry in the September of the following year.

We work with an independent company, Bursary Administration Ltd (BAL) who will review and assess the application and arrange to meet you. BAL will provide a report and recommendation to the Bursary Committee.

The Bursary Committee will meet to consider all reports and recommendations and to make decisions on bursary allocations within the limitations of the bursary budget.

Following the admissions process, where the pupil is offered a place, we will write to notify Parents/guardians of whether their bursary application has been successful. If successful, an offer letter will specify the conditions of the award. Each bursary offer will reflect the particular circumstances of the recipient and will be expressed as a specific amount of remission against the day fees only.

Parents/guardians are required to sign a letter accepting the place at the School and an acknowledgement agreeing to any conditions relating to the bursary.

2. Late applications

Bursary applications received after the deadline will not be considered at the initial meeting of the Bursary Committee. However, should bursary funds remain available, late applications will be considered in a second applications round in the Spring term.

3. Emergency Bursary Applications

Means tested bursaries are sometimes available to families whose financial position worsens unexpectedly during a child's education at the School. This type of bursary is available on a short-term basis only with the aim that a student's education is not unduly disrupted at an especially difficult time. Parents are urged to contact the School as soon as possible to discuss such instances. As bursary funds are limited support is not usually available offered towards boarding fees.

Applications for emergency bursaries may be made at any time during the year. Parents/guardians seeking an emergency bursary are required to complete and submit a means tested bursary application form accompanied by full documentary evidence. We will work with BAL to ensure that the application is assessed and reviewed by the bursary committee as quickly as possible.

Each bursary offer will reflect the particular circumstances of the recipient and will be expressed as a specific amount in remission of tuition fees.

4. The Case for Assistance.

Competition for bursaries is always strong and financial support may only be given to those with a strong case for support. Those which meet the financial criteria will be assessed objectively but simply meeting the financial criteria is not sufficient. The Bursary Committee will consider a number of factors when making the judgement as to the justification for support, and the extent of such support. In the main, the child's suitability for the School is the first consideration.

Suitability

Assessing a child's suitability will not be based purely on the academic assessment results of each applicant. The Bursary Committee will consider factors such as (in no particular order) academic ability and potential as demonstrated in the entrance process, scholarship offers, Quaker affiliation, family circumstances, and specific social need, alongside what the pupil can offer the School and the School can offer the pupil.

Bursary funds are limited and those judged as likely to gain most from the educational provision will be given priority. Each pupil to whom support is offered must, in the opinion of the Head, be likely to make sound academic progress following admission and possess the potential to develop the quality of his or her work, and benefit from participation in the wider, extra-curricular activities on offer at the School. In normal circumstances, each applicant should at least meet the School's standard admissions requirements. Please see our website for further information on Scholarships requirements.

Financial Limitations.

The amount of the bursary award is not influenced by the level of the academic ability of the child but by the extent of need.

Each case is assessed on its own merits and awards are made accordingly, subject to the School's ability to fund these within the context of what is viable within the context of its overall budget. It is recognised that judgements about what sacrifices a family should make to pay school fees will be personal. However, the School has a duty to ensure that all financial awards are well focussed and so, as well as current earnings, other factors which will be considered in determining the necessary level of grant will include:

- The ability to improve the financial position or earning power of the family. For example, where there are two partners, both would be expected to be employed unless one is prevented from doing so through incapacity, the need to care for children under school age or other dependents, or the requirements of their partner's work.
- Opportunities to release any capital. Significant capital savings and investments would be expected to be used for the payment of school fees, as would equity values in houses.
- In cases of separation, the contribution made by the absent parent.
- Contribution to household costs by other, wider, family members, any adults unrelated to the child or by outside sources.
- Acknowledging that others might have a different view, the School considers that the following would not be consistent with the receipt of a scholarship/bursary:
 - Frequent or expensive holidays.
 - New or luxury cars.
 - Investment in significant home improvements.
 - Significantly large properties of high value.
 - A second property/land holdings.

Other Factors

It is recognised that, in addition to suitability and financial limitations, there may be other circumstances which should be considered. These will be at the discretion of the Bursary Committee.

5. What is Expected of a Family in Receipt of a Bursary?

Parents are expected to pay the remainder of the fees on time by the normal due date. Any 'extras' such as trips, school uniform or any specialist activities are payable in full.

We expect all students in receipt of a bursary to demonstrate a real desire to learn, good behaviour and to make a positive contribution to the life of the school.

Failure to meet the expectations of the award may, in exceptional circumstances mean a bursary is withdrawn.

6. Review of existing bursaries

All bursary awards are reviewed annually. Existing bursary holders will be issued with repeat application forms during the Spring Term. These applications may be subject to the same review process by BAL as carried out for new applications. Alternatively, a paper-based review prior to consideration by the Bursary Committee may be carried out.

Please note, this annual review process may conclude with the Bursary Committee agreeing a reduction or withdrawal of an award where:

- the family's financial circumstances have changed
- a pupil's progress, attitude or behaviour has been unsatisfactory, or
- the parents/guardians have failed to support the School, for example by the late payment of any contribution they are making to the fees.

7. Other Sources of Bursary Assistance

In addition to the School's bursary Fund, there are several educational and charitable trusts which provide assistance with tuition fees. Sibford School encourages parents/guardians to apply for support where it is felt a good case can be made for assistance.

Further information on how to pursue such assistance may be obtained from the Finance Officer by emailing: ntunncliffe@sibfordschool.co.uk