



Bursary Policy

General

The governors of The Unicorn School are committed to broadening access to the school by offering to eligible parents/guardians means-tested financial support with the payment of school fees. Such support is known as a bursary and bursaries may be awarded in the form of a discount on tuition fees payable, depending on the financial, compassionate or other pertinent circumstances of applicants.

We can only formally consider applications from parents/guardians of children who have been offered a place by the school. The bursary form is available from the Bursar.

Financial assistance with fees

Bursary awards are dependent on an assessment of parental financial circumstances. Bursaries are reviewed annually and may increase or decrease due to changes in parental circumstances. Each situation will be assessed on its own merits and awards will be made accordingly, subject to the school's ability to fund them within the context of its budget.

The financial assessment takes account of the value of assets held, including the family home, savings, investments, pension provision and other realisable assets, as well as income, the size of the family, and any other dependents. Other factors that will be considered in determining the level of grant will be:

- The ability of the family to improve its financial situation. 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 capital, for example significant savings and investments, or home equity.
- Contribution to household costs by other family members, or other adults, or from other sources.
- Where siblings are at other fee paying schools or places of education, it would be expected that applications for financial assistance have been made to those organisations.
- The school considers that the following would not be consistent with the receipt of a bursary: frequent or expensive holidays, new or luxury cars, investment in significant home improvements, a second property or land, lavish personal expenditure.
- Separated parents: the school recognises that the financial arrangements of and between parents/guardians who live separately can be complex. However, in general, the financial circumstances of both parents/guardians will be assessed.
- If either parent is absent, the school will decide to what extent the absent parent's/guardian's financial circumstances should be assessed.

- In the case of divorce, court orders and financial agreements regarding the care of dependents should be disclosed.

Requests for financial support usually fall into two categories:

- New applicants to the school where a place has been offered but parents/guardians are unable to fund the tuition fees.
- Existing pupils where a change in parents'/guardians' circumstances has resulted in difficulty in meeting tuition fees and may result in the child being withdrawn part way through a stage of education.

New applicants to the school

Awareness - Information provided by the school alerting the parents/guardians of potential pupils to the possibility of gaining means-tested financial support with the payment of school fees is included on the school website.

The application process

Bursaries may be made available to parents/guardians of children entering any year-group of The Unicorn School (see the school's Admission's Policy). They are awarded at the discretion of the Governors and funds are limited.

Step 1: - Application. Parents or guardians seeking a bursary are required to complete an application form which seeks to establish the financial circumstances of the household. The form can be obtained from the Bursar at bursar@unicornoxford.co.uk. The main deadline for applications is **31st December**, however out of cycle applications may be considered (see below).

Step 2 – Assessment. The main cycle of assessment and review of applications for the following academic year takes place during the spring term. Applications received prior to **31st December** will be assessed during the spring term, with awards being confirmed at the end of the spring term. The majority of funds for the following academic year will be committed during this time.

The school uses an external company, Bursary Administration Limited (BAL), to review each credible bursary application submitted wherever possible. The company reviews applications, and may carry out home visits and financial checks on the bursary applicants on behalf of the school. They will provide a confidential financial report to the school. Applicants should be aware that funds are limited and not all applications may be successful.

Where it is not possible for BAL to review an application (for example, for an out of cycle application), the school's bursary panel will assess an application internally. This will be explained to the applicant. For subsequent applications, BAL will be asked to review the application.

Step 3 – internal review. All applications received will be considered by a panel at the end of the spring term, and recommendations made to Governors in line with confidential levels of awards and budget availability.

Step 4 – notification of outcome. Outcomes will be notified to applicants immediately after Governor approval of awards.

Should additional bursary funds become available at other points during the year, the panel will meet to consider any further applications and make appropriate recommendations to Governors. Please contact the Bursar for an up to date situation.

Existing pupils - change in family circumstances

The school will, in normal circumstances, make provision for cases of sudden, unforeseen need or where applications meriting bursary assistance are received. Parents/guardians with a child at the school whose financial circumstances suddenly change may apply for a bursary to the Head or Bursar, explaining their situation and using the standard application form, available from the Bursar. Such awards are subject to the availability of funding and cannot be guaranteed.

Annual review

All bursary awards are subject to repeat testing of parental means each year and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on parental circumstances. Current bursary holders will be issued with repeat means-testing forms in December each year, for return by **31st December**, and independent review by BAL. For those previously in receipt of bursaries, the Head and Bursar, in making their joint recommendation to the Governors, have the discretion to recommend to the Governors the reduction or withdrawal of an award not only where a pupil's progress, attitude or behaviour has been unsatisfactory but also where the parents/guardians have failed to support the school, for example by the late payment of any contribution they are making to the fees, or if the account is in arrears.

Bursary funding may not continue if the annual bursary forms are not completed and returned, with the necessary documentation, by the requested date.

Bursary funding may be requested to be repaid when a parent/guardian has knowingly or recklessly provided false or inaccurate information about their financial position.

Confidentiality

The school respects the confidentiality of bursary awards made to families and recipients are expected to do likewise.

Other sources of funding

In addition to the school's bursary fund, there are a number of educational and charitable trusts which provide assistance with tuition fees. In the majority of cases, these are to assist children who are already attending a fee-paying school and due to a change of circumstances may be unable to remain. The 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 Bursar.

Created by: Bursar

Reviewed by: Andrew Day (Head)

Date of next review: September 2021