



## **S71- Bursary Policy**

**Reviewed: Finance and General Purposes Committee**

**Approved: Full Governing Body**

**Approved Date: June 2024**

**Next Review Date: June 2025**

## **Bursary Scheme Policy and Guidance**

### **Background and Purpose of the Bursary Scheme**

The Bursary Scheme is financed by a distinct and dedicated charitable fund which the trustees manage in line with Charity Commission requirements. There is no set number of Bursary Awards that may be made - the effective limit will be determined by the funds available.

For those parents for whom the parental school fee presents an impossible burden, a means-tested bursary is available, and applications are welcomed by the School and Governors from families who could not otherwise afford to send their child to Westminster Abbey Choir School.

A Bursary can be given to cover up to 100% of the parental school fee element only. In cases of particular need, access to other funding for extra costs, for example instrumental sheet music and music examinations, may be available.

All bursaries are awarded at the absolute discretion of the Bursary Panel Committee, and their decision will be final. The Headteacher and School Business Manager are responsible for the management and coordination of the process.

Information provided by the School, alerting parents/guardians of potential and existing pupils to the possibility of gaining means-tested financial support with the payment of school fees, is available on the School website.

### **Applications**

Bursary Administration Limited (BAL), experts in school bursary administration, have been appointed by the School to assist in the assessment of bursary applications. BAL is expert in handling bursary matters both confidentially and with sensitivity. The School covers the costs of administrative services provided by BAL.

- **New Pupil Bursary Applications** – Applications from families where a place has been offered will be processed in the Summer Term, or earlier where possible, immediately prior to their son's planned September start date. Bursaries will be awarded from the start of the Academic Year that the recipient joins the School. Families should make any desire or need to apply for financial assistance known to the School when accepting an offer of a place at the school.
- **Annual Review Applications** – ALL bursary awards are subject to annual review and any award may be withdrawn or varied upwards or downwards depending on parental/guardian financial circumstances. Current bursary holders will be issued with repeat means-testing application forms each academic year in the Spring Term.

Reduction or withdrawal of an award may be considered where parents/guardians have failed to support the school, for example by the late payment of any contribution they are making to school fees.

### **Bursary Applications for Existing Pupils (Change in Family Circumstance)**

An application for bursary assistance can be made at any time from families of existing pupils whose financial circumstances suddenly change, resulting in a difficulty in meeting school fee payments.

Such bursaries would be paid for either a term, or for the remainder of the Academic Year, according to circumstances, and would be subject to annual review for the following academic year.

### **The Application Process**

- Step one – parents/guardians seeking a bursary complete an application form which seeks to establish the financial circumstances of the household. The form, which requests details of all income and assets, is available from the School Business Manager and must be accompanied by full documentary evidence. The completed form(s), together with the necessary documentary evidence, are submitted to School and to Bursary Administration Limited (BAL), our appointed independent assessors, by the date specified by the School Business Manager or otherwise indicated on the application form.
- Step two – BAL will arrange an on-line or telephone meeting with the applicant(s) as required and will provide a written report and financial analysis spreadsheet to the School.
- Step three – the Bursary Committee receives an anonymised version of the BAL report and meets to consider and award successful Bursary applications.
- Step four – the School Business Manager writes to inform applicants of the outcome of their Bursary application.

### **Evaluating Applications for Financial Assistance**

The Bursary Committee will treat every application sympathetically.

Bursaries are awarded in relation to financial need. They are carefully means tested and are reviewed each year to consider the continuing financial need of parents/guardians.

The assessment will be based on the family unit in which the pupil lives, and consideration will be given to any financial contributions from adults and/or charities within or outside that family unit.

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.

### **Financial Limitations**

The amount of the bursary award is not influenced by the academic or singing ability of the pupil. It is recognised that judgements about what sacrifices a family should make to pay school fees are difficult to make. However, the Bursary Committee has a duty to justify all bursary grants 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;
- opportunities to release any capital - significant capital savings and investments would be expected to be used towards the payment of school fees, and equity values in properties may also be relevant;
- in cases of separation, the contribution made by the absent parent;
- where fees are being paid to other schools (or universities) the bursary will take into account such outgoings;
- contribution to household costs by other, wider, family members, any adults unrelated to the child or by outside sources.

It should be noted that the following may be considered to impact eligibility for a bursary:

- frequent or expensive holidays;
- new or luxury cars;
- investment in significant home improvements;
- a second property/land holdings.

#### Other Factors

It is recognised that, in addition to financial limitations there may be other circumstances which should be considered, these include:

- where a child has siblings at the school;
- where the social needs of the child are relevant;
- where the parent/guardian is unable to secure permanent employment due to poor health.

#### **Headteacher's Discretionary Award**

A Headteacher's Discretionary Award, to a maximum of 20% of the annual parental school fee, can be offered by the Bursary Committee to exceptional pupils. The award can be given for the chorister's career of 5 years, but is conditional upon the chorister maintaining excellent academic and performance standards, and also the family's commitment and contribution to the chorister's school life. Such an award would not be made in addition to a bursary.

The Headteacher's Discretionary Award is subject to review each year and possible withdrawal.

#### **Confidentiality**

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

### **Other Sources of Bursary Assistance**

In addition to the school's bursary fund, there are a number of educational and charitable trusts which provide assistance with tuition fees, including:

Choir School Association

<https://www.choirschools.org.uk/help-with-fees/>

The Educational Trusts Forum

Website: [www.educational-grants.org](http://www.educational-grants.org)