



Belmont School Bursary Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The governors of Belmont School are committed to broadening access to the School by offering to eligible parents/guardians means-tested financial support with the payment of the School's fees.
- 1.2 Means tested bursaries are regarded in two categories; those which are life changing offering children who would not otherwise have the opportunity to benefit from education in the independent sector a chance to do so. Bursaries in this category would be at the level of 70%-100% discount on fees and be offered to families with the lowest levels of household income. The second category of means tested support is fee assistance to children of families with mid-range incomes who with a discount on fees in the region of 20%-60% are able to otherwise fund the cost of their children's education. Children of parents with a high household income or assets are unlikely to receive any fee assistance except in the case where there are compelling compassionate circumstances affecting the families long term financial stability.
- 1.2 Bursary awards are subject to repeat testing of parental means each year and may be varied upwards or downwards, depending on parental circumstances. Awards are made on the basis of a completed confidential Statement of Financial Circumstances. The assessment determines the appropriate level of parental contribution in relation to their resources and thus the level of award that will be offered. The level of awards is dependent on parents'/guardians' circumstances (e.g. their savings, investments and realisable assets as well as their income, the size of their family, any other persons dependent upon them) and may also be influenced by compassionate or other pertinent circumstances. The financial income and expenditure is benchmarked against reasonable levels (as advised by a third party advisor) in assessing the families' requirement for bursarial support.
- 1.3 Requests for financial support will be considered from both:
 - a) New applicants to the School where a place has been offered but parents/guardians,
 - b) 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parents'/guardians' circumstances has resulted in difficulty in meeting tuition fees and may result in the child being withdrawn part way through a stage of education.

2 New Applicants to the School

2.1 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 the school fees is included in:

- the School prospectus.
- the School website.

2.2 The Application Process

Bursaries may be made available to parents/ guardians of children entering Year 3 and above of Belmont School. They are awarded at the discretion of the Governors' Bursary Committee and the Bursar is responsible for the management and coordination of the process.

- a) Parents/guardians seeking a bursary are required to contact the Bursar no more than one year ahead of the date of entry to notify her of their intention to apply for bursarial assistance.
- b) Parents/guardians intending to apply for bursarial support are required to follow the application procedure for new entrants, including pupil registration, attending a pupil taster day pending a formal offer of a place by the school. This also includes payment of the associated fees for registration and the holding deposit which reserves the school place once offered.
- c) In the event that the bursary offer is not sufficient to enable the parents/guardians to meet the fee and the school place is declined, the holding deposit will be returned in full.
- d) Following acceptance of a place at the school, the bursary application form, which requests details of income and capital, must be submitted accompanied by full documentary evidence. Parents/guardians are also required to give an indicative figure for the level of bursarial support which they believe they would require.
- e) In addition to the statement of financial circumstances provided, an independent assessment takes place. This assessment usually involves the independent assessor visiting the parents'/guardians' home to ensure the information submitted by the parents/guardians has been correctly interpreted and stated.
- f) The independent assessor prepares their findings which are presented by the Bursar to the School's Bursary Committee for discussion and final decision. This includes an assessment of the likely level of bursarial support the family would require. The Bursary Committee comprises the Headmistress and members of the School Governing Body.
- g) Once a decision by the Committee has been made, the parents/guardians are advised within 3 working days whether their child is to be offered a bursary.
- h) Parents/guardians are then required to confirm in writing within two weeks, their acceptance of the bursary, and to complete an acknowledgement agreeing to any conditions relating to the bursary.
- i) In the event that the bursary offer is not sufficient to enable the parents/guardians to meet the fee and the school place is declined, the holding deposit will be returned in full.

2.3 The Case for Assistance

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 in granting support.

a) Suitability

In assessing a child's suitability, attention will be given to the academic assessment result of each applicant but potential will also be considered as well as actual achievement. Bursary funds are limited and those judged most suitable will be given priority as those likely to gain most from the educational provision. Each pupil to whom support is offered must, in the opinion of the Headmistress, 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 meet the School's normal academic requirements. Previous School reports will be consulted for evidence of good behaviour and attendance statistics.

b) Financial limitations

The amount of the Bursary award is primarily influenced by the extent of need and the suitability of the child. 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 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 bursary support is well-focused and so, as well as current earnings, other factors which will be considered in determining the necessary level of bursarial support will include:

- i. 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 of pre-school age or other dependants, or the requirements of their partner's work.
- ii. 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.
- iii. in cases of separation, the contribution made by the absent parent.
- iv. the contribution to household costs made by other family members, any adults unrelated to the child or by outside sources.
- v. where fees are being paid to other schools or universities.

Acknowledging that others might have a different view, the School considers that the following would not be consistent with the receipt of a bursary:

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

c) Other factors

It is recognised that, in addition to academic ability and financial constraints, there may be other circumstances which should be considered. These include:

- i. where a child has siblings at the School.
- ii. where the social needs of the child are relevant (e.g.: may be suffering from bullying at their present school).
- iii. where a parent or guardian is terminally ill or is unable to secure permanent employment due to poor health.
- iv. where a parental or guardian separation has resulted in the child having to be withdrawn from the school adding to the stress of coping with the separation.

3 Existing Pupils - Change in Family Circumstances

- 3.1 Within overall budget funding, the School will, in normal circumstances, seek to assist parents/guardians in cases of sudden, unforeseen need.

3.2 Parents or guardians with a child at the School whose financial circumstances suddenly change for the worse may apply for a bursary, explaining their situation and using the forms provided.

3.3 Such awards are subject to the availability of funding and cannot be guaranteed. Parents of pupils in Year 2 applying for bursary assistance from Year 3 will be considered at the same time as new entrants.

4 Annual Review

4.1 All bursary awards are subject to repeat testing of parental means annually and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on parental circumstances.

4.2 Current bursary holders will be issued with repeat means-testing forms at the beginning of March each year for return by the end of the month. For those previously in receipt of bursaries, the Bursary Committee has the discretion to reduce or withdraw 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.

5 Confidentiality

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

6 Other Sources of Bursary Assistance

6.1 In addition to the School's bursary fund, there are a number of educational and charitable trusts which provide assistance with tuition fees. Belmont School encourages parents or 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.

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