

WELLS CATHEDRAL SCHOOL'S COMMITMENT TO ACCESS

Wells Cathedral School is committed to broadening access to the School for prospective pupils, as well as supporting current pupils. Assistance with the payment of school fees is available through means-tested financial assistance offered to parents/guardians who can demonstrate a genuine need for support. The School also offers small non-means-tested awards for pupils who show particular aptitude in the areas of academic study, music, creative arts and sports. There is also an all-round scholarship available for pupils who show ability across a number of these areas.

KEY AREAS OF SUPPORT

There are four ways by which the School may reduce the fees payable by parents/guardians:

1. Bursaries

These are means-tested awards, funded by the School, that are applied for the purpose of enabling pupils whose parents/guardians' financial circumstances would otherwise preclude attendance at the School.

2. Scholarship Awards

These are non-means tested awards which are applied for the purpose of recognising particular academic, creative arts, sporting or all-round attainment. It should be noted that this attainment does not include music: as a specialist music school, the fee for our music programme incorporates an assumed element of scholarship award.

3. Music and Dance Scheme Awards

This is a UK government-funded scheme, the awards for which are allocated on a means-tested basis, at the discretion of the School. The aim of the Scheme is to support prospective students who are aspiring professional musicians. Musical ability and potential is determined through an audition process led by the Director of Music and members of the music faculty. In this way, the School can maximise opportunities on the specialist music programme for students whose parents/guardians' financial circumstances would otherwise preclude attendance. As with Scholarships (above), it should be noted that acceptance onto the School's specialist music programme does not, of itself, confer an award of a remission via the Music and Dance Scheme.

4. Choristership Awards

These fixed awards are non-means tested and are conferred upon admission to the Choir of Wells Cathedral and are funded by the School and Wells Cathedral. A non-means-tested award is also provided by the School to ex-choristers of Wells Cathedral who choose to remain as pupils at the School once they cease to be choristers. In addition, there are a

number of specialist external organisations which provide means-tested support to choristers whilst they remain in the choir including, but not limited to, the Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust.

With the exception of the Music and Dance Scheme Awards - which can not be applied in conjunction with either of the other forms of remission, it is possible for elements of one or more of these forms of remission to be received simultaneously. The School's policy in relation to each of these forms of fee remission, including the application process and awarding criteria is set out below.

BURSARIES

Means-tested financial assistance known as a bursary is provided by the School at various levels of support, dependant upon the financial and other circumstances of applicants. Such bursaries are funded from a combination of the School's own financial reserves and from donations received from the Wells Cathedral School Foundation, the School's fundraising body. Requests for financial assistance usually fall into two categories:

1. New applicants to the school, whose parents/guardians are unable to fund the full school fees.
2. Existing pupils where a change in parents/guardians' circumstances has resulted in difficulty meeting school fees and may otherwise result in the child being withdrawn part way through a critical stage of education.

Bursary awards are made on the basis of an assessment of a family's financial circumstances using a Bursary Application Form, including their savings, investments and realisable assets, as well as their income, the size of their family, any other persons dependent upon them and other similar factors. Awards are subject to repeat testing of parental means each year and may be varied upwards or downwards, depending on parental circumstances. Bursaries are available to Scholars and other award holders in addition to any non-means-tested award.

Parents who are likely to require assistance with the payment of school fees should obtain a Bursary Application Form from the Admissions Office or Bursary and complete and return it to the Bursar before registration (for new pupils) or as soon as the event giving rise to financial hardship occurs (for existing pupils). Bursaries are awarded at the discretion of the Governors, and the Bursary Committee, chaired by the Bursar, and is responsible for the management and coordination of the process in accordance with "The Case for Assistance" as set out below.

Assessment of Bursaries

The assessment process takes time and so forms should be submitted in good time. If advice is needed on the detail required, parents should speak with the Admissions Office or Fees Manager. Supplementary information and a home visit may be required. Regrettably, some find the process intrusive but its rigour is necessary to ensure a fair distribution of limited funds. The Committee meets regularly, normally every month, but urgent cases can be handled outside of this cycle and parents are advised of the outcome of its decision as soon as possible. The Committee's decision is final.

The Award of Bursaries

The level of financial assistance is reassessed annually and forms are sent to existing award holders in the Spring. If our assessment of financial need and pupil performance remain unchanged the offer of support is likely to remain the same, but this cannot be guaranteed as the level of financial assistance can rise or fall in response to both factors or, for example, the late payment of fees, or the availability of funds. Parents should not assume that an award made before or on entry to the School will continue at the same level throughout their child's time at the School. Awards may be increased, reduced or withdrawn depending on our assessment of parental circumstances as outlined above. Where there is a reduction we will explain the reasons for the change in our assessment.

The Case For Assistance

The Bursary Committee will judge the case for support on the following grounds:

1. The availability of funds: The School has made a long-term commitment to providing financial assistance to support parents but all awards are made subject to the availability of sufficient funds.
2. Financial need: A comprehensive evaluation of parental/household income, expenditure and assets is made each year - the 'means-testing'. In assessing the affordability of school fees the cost of extras, such as for core trips and activities, is taken into account. In addition, it is assumed that pupils are likely to bring laptops (or equivalent tablet devices) into school and so the cost of these has been incorporated into the assessment of living standards. 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 bursaries are well focussed and so, in undertaking this process the School uses data available from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to inform its assessment of living standards. Certainly, a lifestyle deemed luxurious would not be consistent with receipt of financial assistance. The following guidelines may be useful:
 - a. Income from all sources will be considered net of taxes, as well as outgoings such as pension contributions and mortgage payments.
 - b. In cases of separation, the contribution made by the absent parent is considered alongside contributions to household costs by others, e.g. grandparents/family members, any adults unrelated to the child living in the home or by outside sources.
 - c. 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 working 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.
 - d. Opportunities to release any capital; capital savings and investments would be expected to be used for the payment of school fees, as would equity values in houses.
 - e. Where fees are being paid to the School for siblings this commitment will be taken into account. Accounting for the cost of educating children at other schools is rarely possible.
 - f. Acknowledging that others might have a different view, the School considers that frequent or expensive holidays, new or luxury cars, investment in significant home improvements or second property/land holdings, as well as excessive expenditure on luxuries, such as eating out or on retail goods and services, are rarely consistent with the award of financial assistance.

3. Potential of the pupil to benefit. The likely benefit to the pupil (in academic and other ways), will be judged by past and present attitude and performance. The ability to take full advantage of the School's opportunities and to benefit others will be important in determining the pupil's priority for bursary support. However, the financial amount of the bursary award is not influenced by the level of ability of the pupil, 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 its overall budget.
4. Other pertinent factors. There may be other factors that are taken into account in assessing merit for financial assistance, such as:
 - a. Siblings already at Wells
 - b. Any existing scholarship or other award
 - c. Social or psychological needs
 - d. Other sources of funds
 - e. Where the social needs of the child are relevant
 - f. Where a parent/guardian is terminally ill or is unable to secure permanent employment due to poor health.
5. Parents suffering unforeseen financial hardship whilst their child is in an exam year will be a priority for support.

The Bursary Committee will review the outcome of the tests and interviews in accordance with the criteria set out under "The Case for Assistance". It will prepare a short list of pupils who will be selected to receive a bursary subject to final checking of the financial circumstances by the Bursar, which may include a home visit if one has not already been completed.

Parents/guardians will be advised of the outcome and are then required to sign a letter accepting the place at the school and an acknowledgement agreeing to any conditions relating to the bursary.

Existing Pupils - Change in Family Circumstances

Pupils who do not receive a bursary at entry are eligible to be considered for a bursary in the event that their family financial circumstances change whilst they are at the School. The application process and factors for consideration will be the same as set out above for new entrants, but in addition a pupil's progress, attitude and behaviour at the School will be taken into account.

Within overall budget funding, in normal circumstances the School will set aside each year a Hardship Fund for cases of sudden, unforeseen need or where applications meriting bursary assistance are received out of the normal calendar cycle for bursary submission, scrutiny and award. This sum will be set within budgetary constraints. Parents/guardians of a pupil at the School whose financial circumstances suddenly change may apply for a bursary to the Bursar explaining their situation and by submitting a Bursary Application Form which is available on the School website. 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. Parents of bursary holders will be asked to complete Bursary Application Forms to reflect their financial circumstances each year.

For those previously in receipt of bursaries, the Bursary Committee has 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.

Confidentiality

All financial details are treated by the School as strictly confidential and recipients of awards are expected to take the same approach. The school reserves the right to withdraw the bursary if parents/guardians disclose details to a third party (excluding disclosure to charities and trusts in pursuance of additional funding).

Other Sources of Bursary Assistance

In addition to School funded bursaries, there are a number of educational and charitable trusts which provide assistance with tuition fees. The School encourages parents/guardians to apply for support where it is felt a good case can be made for assistance.

The Wells Cathedral School Foundation office can supply details of charitable trusts that may assist with fees at independent schools, particularly when financial circumstances drastically alter during a child's exam course, or if additional support is required. Some information is available from the Educational Trusts' Forum at: www.educational-grants.org or from the Independent Schools Educational Grants Advice helpline: 01932 865619.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Scholarship awards are available for students who show significant current ability in a particular aspect(s) of school life. Scholarships are awarded on merit at the rate of 5% or 10% of fees, irrespective of family financial circumstances. The criteria for applying for a scholarship award include the following, assessed by attendance on one of our scholarship days consisting of both examinations and interviews:

Academic Award:

- A current high aptitude in one or more academic subjects on the curriculum at Wells Cathedral School
- Accomplished critical thinking skills
- Recommendation by current academic tutor
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

Sports Award:

- County, or county equivalent, representative honours in at least one major sport that is offered by Wells Cathedral School
- 'A team standard' in at least two of the major sports offered by Wells Cathedral School (Girls - Hockey, Netball, Tennis, Athletics; Boys - Rugby, Hockey, Cricket, Tennis, Athletics).
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

Creative Arts Award:

- A current high aptitude in two of the following activities: Dance, Art, Musical Theatre, Drama, Music. N.B Musical Theatre and Drama cannot be selected together.
- Regular experience in performing, to a high standard, in both activities
- A desire to take at least one of these curriculum areas onto GCSE and A Level
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

All-Rounder Award:

- Currently a very good performer academically with, approximately, at least four As and four Bs predicted at GCSE or on a recent report.
- Current high aptitude in two of the following activities: Sport, Music, Drama, Art, Dance, Musical Theatre, Outdoor Education. N.B Musical Theatre and Drama cannot be selected together; neither can Sport and Outdoor Education.
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

If further financial assistance is required, a bursary may also be considered on the basis of financial need in conjunction with a scholarship. The criteria for bursary support is outlined in the previous section.

MUSIC AND DANCE SCHEME

Wells Cathedral School is one of four UK independent boarding schools that provide a specialist music programme for which the Government provides financial assistance through its Music and Dance Scheme (MDS). A limited number of MDS-sponsored places are available to pupils who meet the eligibility criteria set by the Department for Education, which administers the Scheme. Different eligibility criteria apply to UK residents, European Union students, non-European Union students and UK citizens living abroad.

The scheme is means-tested and a parental contribution towards fees may be required depending on family financial circumstances (gross family income). Selection for an MDS place takes place through the School's specialist music programme audition process.

CHORISTERSHIP AWARDS

Financial Support for Boy and Girl Choristers Whilst in the Choir of Wells Cathedral

The choir of Wells Cathedral is comprised of pupils from the School. The Chapter of Wells Cathedral provides a non-means-tested choral scholarship of 25% of fees (day and boarding) to current boy choristers, whilst the School awards non-means-tested choral scholarships to current girl choristers of 10% of day (tuition) fees.

The Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust

Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust is a grant-awarding charitable trust which exists to help young singers from any background to contribute to a Cathedral tradition that has endured for more than a thousand years; to train in a world-class musical environment, and to enjoy a unique all-round education at Wells Cathedral School, either as day pupils or boarders.

The Trust has created an endowment fund with the aim of providing bursaries for talented children so none is barred from this opportunity for financial reasons, in order to give the

opportunity for choral training and an excellent education to more people from a wider range of backgrounds throughout the UK.

Further Support for Choristers

For parents who require further financial support there are a number of national grant-giving bodies, which support cathedral choristers. The Choir Schools Association is a grant awarding body funded by the Department for Education which gives financial assistance to families up to a predetermined household income threshold. Some of our choristers in the past have had assistance through the kind support of the Ouseley Trust and the French Huguenot Church of London Charitable Trust. The Chapter of Wells Cathedral also has a bursary support fund from which additional means-tested support can be provided. There are also other sources of funding (for example, for children of those in specific professions such as the clergy) which have not been discussed here.

Further School Support Beyond the Choir

All former boy and girl choristers of Wells Cathedral are entitled to an ex-chorister scholarship at the rate of 2% of the gross boarding or day fees for each year's service up to a maximum of 8%, for long as they remain a pupil at the school.

The School, the Cathedral and the Chorister Trust, continue to do all they can to ensure that Wells Cathedral Choir is as inclusive as possible to children who show the necessary potential, irrespective of their gender or the financial circumstances of their families.

APPLICATION PROCESSES

The multiplicity of types of award and differing application criteria, processes and timelines can appear to be indecipherable. Indeed much of the detailed application criteria and processes are outside the scope of the policy, may vary from time to time, and are therefore not included here.

Information, advice and assistance with matters relating to remissions can be obtained from the following:

1. The Registrar and Admissions Office (prospective pupils)
2. The Bursar and Fees Manager (existing pupils)
3. The Co-ordinator of Choristers (prospective and current choristers)

**Bursar
December 2017**