



# Fee Remissions Policy

(Discounts, Scholarships and Bursaries)

<b>Title of Policy</b>	Fee Remissions Policy
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Head Master
<b>Responsibility</b>	Bursar
<b>Date reviewed</b>	September 2023
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## **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. Unfortunately, the School does not possess unlimited Bursary Funds, and so it is necessary to consider the availability of funding alongside other factors when making awards: The criteria are set out below in the section 'The Case for Assistance'.

## **KEY AREAS OF SUPPORT**

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

### **1. Discounts**

These are non-means-tested awards, funded by the School, that are claimed based on defined criteria in relation to the status of parents,

### **2. Scholarship Awards**

These are non-means-tested awards funded by the School which are awarded for the purpose of recognising particular academic, creative, musical, mathematical, sporting or all-round attainment.

### **3. Bursaries**

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

### **4. 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.

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.

## **DISCOUNTS**

Criteria based non-means tested discounts are available according to the status of a parent. Appropriate evidence will be sought to confirm status, and the appropriate discount will be offered according to the status criteria being:

- a sibling to an existing pupil at the school will receive a discount; a second sibling will receive a further discount, a third sibling will receive another further discount and a fourth sibling will receive a further additional discount. The sibling discounts are calculated on the basis of the pupils present at the School in any one Academic Year and are applied to both Tuition and Boarding Fees..
- a current staff member at Wells Cathedral School;
- a registered ordained minister in the Church of England, and/or a current member of the Vicars Choral at Wells Cathedral;
- an Old Wellensian;
- a current serving UK member of HM Armed Forces or an employee of the UK Diplomatic Services.

## **SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS**

Scholarship awards are available for pupils who show significant current ability in a particular aspect(s) of school life. Scholarships are awarded on merit and applied to Tuition Fees only, irrespective of family financial circumstances. We also offer a limited number of scholarships at higher rates for exceptional candidates. The criteria for applying for a scholarship award are set out below and are assessed by attendance on one of our scholarships days consisting of both examinations and interviews:

### **Academic Award:**

- A current high aptitude and potential for learning as demonstrated through CAT4 testing
- Accomplished critical thinking skills
- Recommendation by current academic tutor
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

### **Maths Award:**

- A current high aptitude and potential for learning as demonstrated through CAT4 testing
- Accomplished mathematical thinking and problem solving skills
- Recommendation by current Maths teacher
- 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

**Drama Award**

- Clear passion for drama (whether performing, stage managing or technical)
- Regular experience in productions to a high standard (whether backstage or performing)
- Willingness, and aptitude, to study drama up to A-Level
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

**Art Award**

- Clear passion and aptitude for art
- Portfolio of a high level commensurate with pupils' age
- Willingness, and aptitude, to study art up to A-Level
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

**General Music Award**

- Clear passion and aptitude for music
- Willingness, and aptitude, to study music up to GCSE
- Currently performing at a level commensurate with our school ensembles
- Willingness, and aptitude, to embrace music as part of a broader education
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship

**All-Rounder Award:**

- Currently a very good performer academically with the ability to maintain a high academic standard whilst actively engaged in the full life of the school.
- Current high aptitude and potential in two of our standard scholarship award categories.
- An excellent attitude towards learning and scholarship.

**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. 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. 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.

- **Financial Support for Boy and Girl Choristers whilst in the Choir of Wells Cathedral**

The choir of Wells Cathedral is composed of pupils from the School. The Chapter of Wells Cathedral and the School provide a non-means-tested choral scholarship (applied to Tuition and Boarding Fees) to current choristers.

- **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 to facilitate accessibility to this opportunity who would otherwise be precluded for financial reasons, and to ensure that the opportunity for choral training and an excellent education is available to people from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible.

- **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 choristers of Wells Cathedral are entitled to an ex-chorister scholarship according to the number of years' participation in Wells Cathedral Choir which is applied to Tuition and Boarding Fees for as long as the pupil remains at the School..

If further financial assistance is required, a School 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 following section.

## **BURSARIES**

Means-tested financial assistance known as a bursary is provided by the School at various levels of support, depending 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 grants are made on the basis of an assessment of a family's financial circumstances. Parents will need to submit information using the School's dedicated secure online portal and will be expected to provide information on their savings, investments and assets, as well as their

income, the size of their family, any other persons dependent upon them and other similar factors. Grants are subject to reassessment 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 contact the Bursary at [bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com](mailto:bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com) to register and request a link to the School's dedicated secure online portal which will gather the required information. Requests should be made before registration (for new pupils) or as soon as the event giving rise to financial hardship occurs (for existing pupils). Bursaries are granted at the discretion of the Governors, and the Bursary Committee, chaired by the Bursar, is responsible for the management and coordination of the process in accordance with "The Case for Assistance" as set out below.

### **Availability of Bursaries**

The School is committed to broadening access to the School for prospective pupils, as well as supporting current pupils. It therefore provides assistance with the payment of school fees to parents/guardians who can demonstrate a genuine need for support. However, the School's financial bursary resources are not infinite, and so it will not always be possible to provide the level of financial assistance necessary to facilitate a child's attendance at the School. The School must therefore consider availability of funds as part of its assessment of the case for assistance (described in more detail below).

### **Assessment of Bursaries**

The assessment process takes time and so information should be submitted in good time, and ideally no later than 1 December for the following Academic Year. If advice is needed on the detail required, parents should contact [bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com](mailto:bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com). 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 Bursary Committee meets regularly, and parents are advised of the outcome of its decision as soon as possible. The Bursary Committee's decision is final.

### **The Grant of Bursaries**

The level of financial assistance is reassessed annually and requests are sent to existing grant holders in the Autumn to obtain updated financial circumstances information. 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 a grant made before or on entry to the School will continue at the same level throughout their child's time at the School. Grants 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 grants 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 financial benchmarking data 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 dependants, 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. The cost of educating children at other schools cannot be taken into consideration.
  - 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 grant 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 grants 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 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.

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 grant.

### **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 contacting [bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com](mailto:bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com). Such grants are subject to the availability of funding and cannot be guaranteed.

### **Annual Review**

All bursary grants are subject to reassessment of parental means annually and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on parental circumstances. Parents of bursary holders will be asked to submit updated financial information via the School's dedicated secure online portal 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 a grant 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 received by the School are treated as strictly confidential using the School's secure system and recipients of grants 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 ([foundation@wells-cathedral-school.com](mailto:foundation@wells-cathedral-school.com)) 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](http://www.educational-grants.org) or from the Independent Schools Educational Grants Advice helpline: 01932 865619.

## **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, non-UK 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.

## **APPLICATION PROCESSES**

The School's website provides more information on the timeframes and events organised by the School to support applicants: <https://wells.cathedral.school/application-process/>

Applications for financial support should be communicated as soon as possible and ideally no later than 1 December to allow for the gathering of relevant information and assessment. Requests for such support should be directed in the first instance to the Bursary who can provide information, advice and assistance with matters relating to remissions at the dedicated Bursary email address: [bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com](mailto:bursary@wells-cathedral-school.com).

## **INTERACTION OF DIFFERENT REMISSIONS**

Some of the remission awards explained above will operate on a stand-alone basis making the individual pupil ineligible for any further award, e.g. those pupils who are granted an MDS place. Where criteria determined awards are made, then it is possible that further awards may also be available. Each individual case is considered carefully by the Bursary Committee and recommendations made to the Governors for final approval. In certain circumstances where multiple awards are being made, the total award to any one individual may be capped.