

Bursary Policy

Withington Girls' School

October 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Withington Girls School (the "School") is committed to providing financial support for talented girls from low and middle income backgrounds through means-tested bursaries. The School does not make financial awards solely based on ability; instead it seeks to direct bursary funds to those families most in need, to allow their daughter to fulfil her potential. However, the Headmistress reserves the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.2. On average, more than £830k per annum is spent supporting over 90 children with means-tested bursaries, which range in value from 100% to 10% of the full Senior School tuition fee and 10% to 50% of the Junior tuition fee, depending on the family's financial circumstances.
- 1.3. In cases where a 100% Award is made, additional assistance may also be available with the cost of uniform, music or drama lessons and school trips.
- 1.4. Bursaries are funded by the Marjorie Hulme Bursary Fund through the generosity of donors, charities, trusts, foundations and by school funds and, as a full bursary is worth a considerable amount, a rigorous process is in place to identify which families should be awarded bursaries.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1. The School's means-tested bursaries are available for external candidates joining us in years 5, 6, 7 and 12.
- 2.2. Applications are not accepted from existing pupils of the School unless in exceptional circumstances when family have experienced an unexpected and significant change in circumstances, either on a temporary or permanent basis. In these cases, the family may request to be considered for a means-tested bursary and if accepted, they will follow the same process as external applications.
- 2.3. Demand for bursaries far exceeds the bursary funding available and a limited number of full bursaries can be offered. Parents who choose to participate in the bursary application process must do so with an understanding that securing a bursary is not a given, even if eligibility criteria have been met.

3. Criteria

3.1. A bursary application will only be successful if both of the following criteria are met:

- 3.1.1. The child is of exceptional ability, as demonstrated by their performance in the entrance examination and interview for Year 7 entry; the entrance assessment for Junior entry; and predicted GCSE results and interview for Sixth Form entry, supported, where available, by a reference from their current school.
- 3.1.2. It is proven, through full financial disclosure and by an independent assessment, that the family is in need of financial support to enable their daughter to attend the School.

3.2. Due to the complex and varied nature of each bursary assessment, the School does not publish detailed criteria for the allocation of bursary funding, however, the aim is to develop a full understanding of the family circumstances and the following information is assessed:

- 3.2.1. Family income and expenditure
- 3.2.2. Assets, including property and savings
- 3.2.3. Liabilities, including mortgages and loans

3.3. A guideline figure for qualifying household income is £60,000 per annum or less. Parents whose gross income from all sources exceeds £80,000 per year are unlikely to qualify for an award.

3.4. Full or partial bursaries may be offered according to the family's financial circumstances. The School is only able to offer a limited number of full bursaries so parents of bursary applicants will greatly increase their chance of being considered for support if they are seeking partial financial assistance.

4. Bursary Offer Principles

4.1. The amount of the bursary award is determined by the extent of financial need, alongside the child's academic ability. Each bursary application is assessed on its own merits and awards are made accordingly, subject to the funds available each year.

4.2. The School does not offer Scholarships, on the principle that financial assistance is awarded solely on the basis of means-tested financial need.

4.3. The School has a duty to its donors and other supporters to ensure that all bursaries are focused on those in greatest need. We will consider a number of factors in determining the level of financial support we can offer, including but not limited to:

- 4.3.1. Current earnings.
- 4.3.2. In cases of separation, the contribution or potential contribution made

by both parents will be considered and separate financial reviews will be required.

- 4.3.3. The ability to improve the financial position or earning power of the family.
 - 4.3.4. Opportunities to release any capital including any significant capital savings, investments, second properties and/or other assets that could be used towards the payment of school fees.
 - 4.3.5. Contribution by others to household costs, for example by extended family members, any adults unrelated to the child or by outside sources.
 - 4.3.6. Payment of fees to other schools.
 - 4.3.7. Lifestyle of the family including level of expenditure on holidays, cars, home improvements etc.
- 4.4. We recognise that, in addition to ability and financial constraints, other circumstances may be relevant including but not limited to:
- 4.4.1. Where the social needs of the child are relevant.
 - 4.4.2. Where a parent/guardian is ill, has significant caring responsibilities and/or is unable to secure permanent employment.

5. Assessment process for bursary applications

- 5.1. In order to ensure impartiality and good governance, the School appoints an independent company, Bursary Assessment Associates, to conduct a financial review. This is a two-stage process.

5.2. Stage 1

- 5.2.1. Parents indicate on the School's application form that they wish their daughter to be considered for a bursary.
- 5.2.2. On receipt of an application where bursary interest is indicated, parents are provided with a link to a confidential online bursary application form. The information provided via this form is processed and managed by Bursary Assessment Associates. The bursary application form must be completed in full and all required supporting documentation provided by the specified deadline if the parent wishes their daughter to be considered for a bursary award.
- 5.2.3. On completion of the relevant admissions procedure, as set out in the School's Admissions Policy, the results of the entrance examinations or assessments and, where relevant, interviews will be used along with school references, where available, to select pupils who will be made an offer of a place at Withington Girls' School. Based on performance in the entrance examination/assessment/interview, a group of bursary applicants will be shortlisted to participate in the second stage of the bursary application process.

5.3. Stage 2

- 5.3.1. Candidates who have been short-listed for the second stage of the bursary application process and, based on the information provided within the bursary application, may qualify for a bursary, will be invited to participate in a bursary assessment interview that forms part of the independent financial review. This interview will be conducted by Bursary Assessment Associates, either online or during a home visit, to verify the financial eligibility of the applicant's family.
- 5.3.2. The recommendation for each bursary applicant interviewed by Bursary Assessment Associates is considered as part of the offer decision-making process and is used to guide the level of bursary award, if any, to be made to a candidate.
- 5.3.3. We aim to make a range of bursary offers to ensure that we are helping as many children as possible within the limits of the bursary funding we have available, so we will consider the means-testing criteria, ability and potential to make a positive contribution to School life when deciding which candidates should receive bursary offers and the value of those offers.
- 5.3.4. Those candidates who have not received a bursary offer but have passed the entrance examination or assessment may be offered a full fee-paying place because they have met our general academic criteria for admission.
- 5.3.5. The decision of Withington Girls' School is final; there is no appeals procedure as it is the responsibility of applicants to provide true and accurate information through the application process.

6. Bursary terms and conditions

- 6.1. When accepting a bursary award, parents are bound by the conditions for a bursary award. Bursary awards may be withdrawn or reduced if there is any breach of these conditions including non-payment of their share of fees and other costs or if, in the opinion of the Headmistress and after appropriate consultation and support, the child's progress, attendance, attitude or behaviour no longer merits the continuation of the award.
- 6.2. All bursary awards are subject to an annual review to ensure that our funds are being awarded to those families in greatest need. Each year, parents of bursary holders will be asked to complete a means-testing form to reflect their financial circumstances and may be interviewed by Bursary Assessment Associates to verify all the information provided. This review process may lead to the bursary payment being amended to reflect the family's circumstances and their ability to pay.
- 6.3. The School reserves the right to review a bursary award at any time, for example if information comes to light indicating that a family does not meet our bursary criteria. In this situation the School may seek to recover any bursary funds awarded in previous years.

7. Bursary Ambassadors

- 7.1. Pupils in receipt of bursary support in the Sixth Form will be invited to participate in the Bursary Ambassadors programme. Bursary Ambassadors choose to identify themselves as a bursary holder and talk about their experiences to help promote and celebrate the Marjorie Hulme Bursary Fund, for example by featuring in relevant communications, meeting alumnae, donors and prospective donors during visits to the school or at events or visiting primary schools to talk about the opportunities available through a Withington bursary. Full guidance and support is given by the Development Team.
- 7.2. Participation as a Bursary Ambassador is optional and parents/guardians will be asked for permission before their daughter is invited to participate in the programme.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. The information and supporting documentation provided to Bursary Assessment Associates as part of the bursary application process will be stored and processed securely and shared only with those members of the School staff required to access the information as part of their duties, and in accordance with the guidance for the retention of pupils records and the Data Protection Act.
- 8.2. The School respects the confidentiality of bursary awards made to families and recipients are expected to do likewise. The letter confirming the award will refer to this.

9. Review

- 9.1. This policy is reviewed by the Bursar on an annual basis.

Version control

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Date for next review of this policy	June 2025
Policy owner (SLT)	Bursar – Rob Grant
Policy owner (Governor)	Chris Poston