



**THE DOWNS**  
PREPARATORY SCHOOL  
BRISTOL

# Feb 2025

## **BURSARIES AND DISCOUNTS POLICY**

The aim of this policy is to provide a benefit to those parents who would find it very difficult to access or continue educating their children in the independent sector without financial support, as part of the School's on-going public benefit commitment. In addition, this policy outlines the approach taken for other non-means-tested forms of fee discounts.

### **Objectives**

- To support those current parents who fall upon financial difficulties
  - To support those prospective parents who would not be able to access
  - independent education without the financial help of the School
  - To assess the level of financial support the School might be able to offer fairly and thoroughly
- To enable current pupils to continue their education at The Downs until such time as there occurs a natural break in the education process.

### **Types of awards**

#### **Bursaries**

Bursary Awards are granted, after means-tested assessment, to families who would not otherwise be able to educate their children at The Downs. The awards are a means of financial assistance.

Bursary Awards range in values from 100% to 10% of the basic tuition fee. A wide range of factors are considered in granting the awards. These are judged against a consistent set of criteria. These factors include the size of the family, the level of income, capital, debt and asset values.

The number and size of bursaries awarded each year can and does vary.

The circumstances of those parents benefiting from a Bursary Award are re-

assessed every year. Where circumstances have not changed, then the School will normally continue the existing arrangement.

## **Discounts**

Headteacher's Discretionary Discounts represent a small reduction of the basic fee which are awarded at the discretion of the Headteacher. They may also be considered as a means of securing a family's commitment to sending their children to the School, at the discretion of the Headteacher. In most circumstances these Discounts will apply for the full period of time that the pupil is at the School, although they may alternatively apply for a shorter period of time such as a single academic year. In addition, further discounts are available as a consequence of a parent having more than one child in the School (Sibling Discount) or in the event of a teacher having a child in the School (Staff Discount). The discount awards are not subject to means-tested assessment.

## **The Process of Granting Bursaries**

### **Bursary Awards – Eligibility**

Bursaries are awarded according to need and are not dependent on academic performance, before a place is offered. However, the pupils must satisfy the School's standard entry requirements and continue to work to a satisfactory standard whilst in the School.

Bursary applications are considered from both external and internal parties, the children being of any age and number. The number and size of awards depends largely on the School's financial circumstances; nevertheless, the School recognizes its responsibility to the Charity Commission as part of the School's wider public benefit commitment.

A limited number of awards are granted at other stages of the School, which are determined by the availability of bursary funds at the time. Some of these awards are intended to assist existing pupils where there has been a change in financial circumstances which threatens the continuation of the pupil attending the School.

### **Bursary Awards - Application procedure**

Bursary applicants are required to complete a 'Confidential Means Questionnaire' available from the Headteacher's PA or the Bursar. The form requests information which is intended to provide a clear picture of a family's financial circumstances in order to allow the Bursary Committee to make a fair and reasoned evaluation of the application. The Bursary Committee consists of the Chairman of the Finance Committee, the Headteacher, the Bursar and several other Governors that have no conflict of interest in the decision making process. All the information is treated as entirely confidential. If necessary, applicants will be invited into School to discuss any uncertainties with the Bursar. Once the Bursary Committee has come to a conclusion, the Bursar will immediately inform the applicant.

In all cases awards are conditional upon the pupil making reasonable academic progress and maintaining good standards of behaviour. An award may be withdrawn in the event of consistent breach of School rules or serious misconduct. In all cases awards are conditional upon the arrangement remaining entirely confidential to the two parties and the parents must sign a written agreement to this effect.

A Bursary Award or Discount is deducted from the tuition fees and is shown on the fee invoice sent out by the Bursar each term. No actual payment is made to the parent.

## **Funding of bursaries**

Unlike some independent schools, The Downs does not have substantial endowment funds and the School funds all bursaries from its own budgets. Although there is no specific quota for the number of awards that may be made, the bursary fund is limited and it may not be possible to meet all requests for financial support. The School welcomes bursary applications from any family, recognizing the importance of diversity in its school community.

## **Other sources of bursary assistance**

There are a number of educational and charitable trusts which may be able to provide assistance with school fees. The funds of many grant-making bodies are limited and there are sometimes restrictions on who may apply for support. The School encourages parents to apply for support where it is felt a good case can be made for assistance. The following may be a useful source of information and advice: *The Educational Trusts' Forum*: [www.educational-grants.org](http://www.educational-grants.org)

## **Sibling Discounts**

In appreciation of the financial commitment made by parents in various circumstances the following discounts are offered without condition:

1st Sibling	5%
2nd Sibling	10%
3rd Sibling	15%

## **Terms & Conditions**

With the exception of sibling discounts, all bursaries and discounts are offered on a confidential basis and parents are required to sign an agreement to this effect, acknowledging that disclosure may lead to its withdrawal.

They are also required to confirm their understanding that their child must adhere to the School's rules of conduct and that they will work hard and contribute positively to the School. Parents must adhere to the payment terms agreed for their fee account. Where they do not so adhere, the financial support provided may be withdrawn with no notice, at the discretion of the Bursar.

**Monitoring and Evaluation** The policy is reviewed by the Bursar as required, at least every two years. Recommendations for change are presented to the Bursary Committee, debated and implemented if appropriate. The performance of the system is under regular review as the School's management accounts are analysed each term by the Finance Committee on behalf of the Governing Body. The level of support against income and the trends of previous years are used as benchmarks of the School's performance in meeting its public benefit commitments in this area.

**Last updated: February 2025 (following review by Bursary Committee)**