

Bursary Policy

2026

Means-Tested & Hardship Bursaries

Policy and Procedure

Policy Number	FIN-BUR	Version 4	Sept 2026
Scheduled review date	All policies are reviewed annually or as required		

1. INTRODUCTION AND POLICY OBJECTIVE

This policy is intended to set out the process and criteria required to qualify for financial assistance with Ardingly College tuition fees and help families understand the key factors that are taken into consideration. If you require any help or support with the process of applying for financial assistance, please contact the Head of Admissions.

Ardingly College is an academically selective college, with selection based upon academic merit which is assessed through an examination, interview, and references. This Policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the College's Admission Policy which sets out the selection process in detail.

For the avoidance of doubt, all applicants for financial assistance must be for children who are scholars or in receipt of an equivalent award.

The College offers scholarships for excellence in academic studies, music, art, drama, and sport. Details of the process and criteria for scholarships can be found on the College's website.

2. GENERAL

The Governors of Ardingly College are committed to broadening access to education at the college by offering to eligible parents/guardians means-tested financial support with the payment of college fees. Such support is known as a Bursary. Bursaries are usually awarded as a percentage of fees, deducted from tuition fees, and are dependent on the financial circumstances of applicants. It is deliberately intended for those who would otherwise be unable to afford full tuition fees. Bursary awards are subject to an annual review of the parents/guardians' means, and may be removed or varied upwards or downwards, depending on parents/guardians' financial circumstances.

Awards are made on the basis of each individual family's financial circumstances and the level of fees that are payable for their child. Consideration is given to a number of different factors including, but not limited to savings, investments and realisable assets, income, the size of the family, other dependents and like factors.

Awards may also be varied upwards or downwards for compassionate or other pertinent reasons, including but not limited to a pupil's progress, attitude, attendance or behaviour; where the parents have failed to support the college or otherwise have not acted in accordance with their obligations under the college's Terms and Conditions, for example by the late payment of any contribution they are making to the fees; or otherwise in accordance with the terms of the award or the college's Terms and Conditions.

A bursary may be withdrawn in its entirety in accordance with the terms upon which such an award is made or otherwise in accordance with the college's Terms and Conditions. A bursary may also be withdrawn in its entirety if, in the opinion of the Head, the child's attendance, progress and/or behaviour (and/or the parents' behaviour or conduct (or the behaviour or conduct of one of the parents)) no longer merit the continuation of the award.

The college reserves the right to amend the way in which awards are assessed.

Please note that bursaries are only available for Day pupils. Boarding pupils are not eligible under our Bursary policy.

Requests for financial support usually fall into two categories:

- New applicants to the college where a place has been offered but parents/guardians are unable to fund the full tuition fees
- 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.

Within the second category there may be temporary arrangements dealing with the disbursement of "hardship" funds when local or national economic circumstances affect the income of college families. Please see section 12 "Hardship bursaries" for further information.

We also offer Transformational Bursaries (see policy document), specifically for talented and ambitious young people who have experienced a significant disadvantage, or who have been displaced. This programme offers fully funded (100%+ bursaries) places and is run outside of our Bursary policy. For more information, please email the Finance department at Finance@ardingly.com

3. AWARENESS

Information is provided by the College by way of the College website and correspondence from the Admissions' Department, alerting the parents/guardians of potential pupils to the possibility of gaining means-tested financial support with the payment of college fees.

4. KEY PRINCIPLES

The College is a charity, and the funds for financial assistance are sourced 50% from donations, legacies and philanthropic activities and 50% from the college's annual operating budget. It is therefore extremely important that the limited funds available are allocated responsibly, with thorough consideration of each family's circumstances.

All awards of financial assistance are means-tested, which means parents/guardians are asked to answer detailed questions and provide evidence of their financial circumstances.

The Financial Assistance panel ('the Panel') reviews each case individually and may award a discount ranging from 5% to 100% of tuition fees. The Financial Assistance panel is made up of the Finance Director, the Head of College, and the Head of Admissions. Other senior members of the college may be engaged if extra information is required to come to an appropriate decision. Whilst the Panel are guided by the parameters set out below, the limited funds available mean that unfortunately, it is not always able to award financial assistance even when a family's circumstances fall within the parameters. All decisions are at the Panel's discretion and are final.

Families who are awarded financial assistance are required to inform the College within a month of any material change in their circumstances which affects their ability to pay tuition fees. Awards of financial assistance are also subject to periodic review, usually no more than annually, but at the discretion of the College. If a family's circumstances have changed significantly, the level of the award may be adjusted accordingly.

It is important that families are honest and open about their circumstances and fully disclose all relevant information. If the Panel has reason to believe a parent has withheld or provided misleading information for whatever reason, no financial assistance will be awarded, and any existing award may be withdrawn upon review. This policy applies to all parents/guardians of children who require this additional support.

5. APPLICATION PROCESS

Bursaries may be made available to parents/ guardians of day pupils entering Years 7, 9 and Sixth form. Bursaries are not awarded to Boarding pupils. Bursaries are awarded at the discretion of the Panel, whilst the Finance Team are responsible for the management and coordination of the process.

Every year, as part of the annual budgeting process, the Governors in conjunction with the Head of College and the Finance Director determine an amount to be set aside for the provision of means tested bursaries.

The application process is as follows:

Step One

All applicants must start with the Admissions registration form. The form should be submitted by the normal deadlines for an application for a place, which are:

11+ entry: October in the calendar year prior to the year of admission.

13+ entry: November of Year 6.

16+ entry: October in the calendar year prior to the year of admission.

For exact dates, please see our website.

Applicants seeking a bursary are required to complete a bursary application form, and a confidential statement of financial circumstances, which seeks to establish the financial resources of the household. The completed forms, together with the necessary documentary evidence to support the application, are to be submitted directly to Bursary Administration Limited (BAL). BAL is the College's appointed independent assessor.

Please note the bursary deadline for applications is as follows:

For all new entrants to the College for entry years 11+ (Year 7), the application window is from 1 August to 31 October in the year prior to starting at the College.

For all new entrants to the College for entry years 13+ (Year 9), the application window is from 1 October to 30 January in Year 6.

For all new entrants to the College for entry years 16+ (Year 12) the application window is from 1 August to 31 October in the year prior to starting at the College.

Any applications received after 31 October may, in exceptional circumstances, be considered, although it is likely that such applications will only be considered after those that have been submitted ahead of the deadline.

You may withdraw at any time from the process of applying for financial assistance by contacting the Head of Admissions.

Step Two

BAL assess all applications in order to establish the likely level of support which will be required to allow the child to attend the College. You will be contacted to arrange means-testing, which involves answering detailed questions and providing evidence of your family's financial circumstances. This assessment may involve a home visit or online meeting to ensure the information has been correctly interpreted and the basis of the financial assessment has been fair. If the assessor has reason to believe that you have provided inaccurate, incomplete or misleading information, your child will be withdrawn from the application process.

Step Three

The Finance team prepares a recommendation for any Bursary Award. This is considered by the Financial Assistance panel and a joint recommendation is reached.

Step Four

Bursaries will generally be offered after the 11+/16+ scholarship assessment days in November prior to entry, or the 13+ scholarship assessments in March of year 8.

Parents/guardians are usually advised as to whether their application has been successful at the same time or shortly after they are notified that their son or daughter has been offered a place. This is so that parents may make an informed decision before agreeing to accept a place at the College.

In the case of 13+ applicants, a final decision as to whether the College is able to offer a bursary may therefore be deferred until the 13+ scholarship assessments have taken place in March of Year 8.

The decision of the College is final and not subject to appeal.

Step Five

Parents/guardians are then required to sign a letter accepting the place at the College and an acknowledgement agreeing to any conditions relating to the bursary – one of which is that the balance of fees due is paid on time or they will forfeit the bursary.

Existing Pupils

Families of existing pupils may apply for financial assistance if they experience a significant change in circumstances beyond their control that causes difficulty in paying tuition fees, most likely through unexpected loss of income or additional costs.

The first step is to contact the Director of Finance as soon as possible to discuss the change in circumstances and what financial assistance might be needed and for how long. The Director of Finance may arrange for means-testing to ensure the College has a clear picture of the financial impact of the change. Any financial assistance awarded will be for a defined period of time with an agreed date for review.

We try to make the process of application as simple and clear as possible, but we appreciate that it can be daunting. If you would like a confidential discussion on the bursary process ahead of applying, then please contact the Finance Manager at Finance@ardingly.com.

6. SUITABILITY

The Financial Assistance panel 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 College is the first consideration in granting support.

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 Head of college and/or the Financial Assistance panel, 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 College. Each applicant must meet the College's normal academic requirements. Reports from previous college(s) and any reports from the College will be consulted for evidence of good behaviour.

7. FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS

Subject to our suitability criteria above, the amount of the bursary award is not influenced by the level of the academic ability of the child but by the extent of need. Each case is assessed on its own merits and awards are made accordingly, subject to the College'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 College fees will be personal. However, the College has a duty to ensure that all bursary grants are well focused and so, as well as current earnings, other factors which will be considered in determining the necessary level of grant will include:

- 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 under college age or dependents, or the requirements of their partner's work.
- Opportunities to release any capital. Significant capital savings and investments would be expected to be used for the payment of college fees, as would equity values in property or land.
- In cases of separation, the contribution made by the absent parent.
- Contribution to household costs by other, wider family members, any adults unrelated to the child or outside sources.
- Where fees are being paid to the College or other Colleges (or universities) for siblings, the bursary will not subsidise such outgoings.

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

- Frequent or Expensive holidays
- New or Luxury cars
- Significant equity held in either the main residence, additional property, or a combination of both
- High value pensions or investments that are available for drawdown
- Investment in significant home improvements
- A second property/land holdings

Families should be able to demonstrate that they are living within their means, with living arrangements and household expenditure that are affordable within the family's combined income.

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:

- Where the social needs of the child are relevant (e.g.: may be suffering from bullying at their present college).
- Where a parent/guardian is terminally ill or unable to secure permanent employment due to poor health.
- Where a separation has resulted in the child having to be withdrawn from the College adding to the stress of coping with the parents/guardians separating.
- Where a child has siblings at the College and/or close family members who are Old Ardinians.

Consideration is also given to the level of total family bursarial support with an objective to support as many families as possible. It may therefore not be possible to provide bursarial support to future siblings that join at a later stage at the same level, or at all, as existing siblings.

Significant Support

Please note: Significant level of support is defined as usually over 50% of the day fees. Significant bursaries are generally only awarded to those pupils who are able to demonstrate strong academic, sporting or performance skills, and who, in the opinion of the College, would benefit from an education at the College.

8. EXTRAS

Bursary awards apply to Day Tuition Fees only. Extras must be paid in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Ardingly College. In special circumstances awards may be extended to pro-rated assistance for other additional costs that are strictly for the furtherance of relevant academic enrichment.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW

Periodic Reviews Subject to budget restraints, the College will prioritise existing bursary recipients over new applicants, in order to continue to support pupils throughout their time at the College. Awards are subject to repeat testing of parental means each year and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on parental circumstances. Scholars and bursary holders are expected to remain worthy of their position, which is also subject to periodic review. If parents/guardians' circumstances improve, there is an obligation to make the College aware.

Current bursary holders will be issued with a letter during the Lent term each year and are asked to complete an annual declaration, detailing any significant changes in their financial circumstances.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

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

11. DATA PROTECTION

The College complies with all applicable data protection legislation. Please see the College's privacy notice on our website.

12. HARDSHIP BURSARIES

The College 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, with a child at the College whose financial circumstances suddenly change may apply for such a bursary to the Director of Finance explaining their situation using the application form to be requested from the Finance team.

Such awards are only considered for day pupils in Years 7 to 13 and are subject to the availability of funding and therefore cannot be guaranteed.

13. OTHER SOURCES OF BURSARY ASSISTANCE

In addition to the College's funds, there are a number of educational and charitable trusts which provide assistance with tuition fees. In the majority of cases, these are to assist children who are already attending a fee-paying college and due to a change in circumstances may be unable to remain. The College encourages parents to apply for support where it is felt a good case can be made for such assistance. Further information on how to pursue such assistance may be obtained from the Finance Team. Finance@ardingly.com

Please see the below links for options:

The Educational Trusts Forum - Website: <http://educational-grants.org/>

Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation - Website: <https://www.royalspringboard.org.uk/>