



# READING BLUE COAT

## Bursary Policy

### General

The Governors of Reading Blue Coat School are committed to broadening access to education at the School by offering to eligible parents means-tested financial support for the payment of School fees for as many students as possible who meet the School's entry criteria. Such support is known as a Bursary. Bursaries may be awarded in the form of a discount of up to 100% of tuition fees, depending on the individual circumstances of the prospective student and each of his or her parents.

The School will review Bursary Awards on an annual basis. This review may include a full review of the student's and his or her parent's financial circumstances, with fresh information being required about the student's parents' circumstances at each review. Bursary awards may be removed or varied upwards or downwards, depending on the student's and parents' financial circumstances. Parents are periodically expected to confirm in writing that their circumstances mean they still require the support of a Bursary. The School will advise when this is required.

The level of Bursary is linked to this scale, they may be varied upwards or downwards depending on the student's each parent's financial circumstances (e.g. their savings, investments and realisable assets as well as their income, the size of their family, any other persons dependent upon them and other factors).

Awards may also be varied upwards or downwards for compassionate or other pertinent reasons, including but not limited to a student's progress, attitude, attendance or behaviour; where the parents have failed to support the School or otherwise have not acted in accordance with their obligations under the School'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 School'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A Bursary may be withdrawn in its entirety in accordance with the terms upon which such an award is made or otherwise in accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions. A bursary may also be withdrawn in its entirety if, in the opinion of the Head, the child's attendance, progress and/or behaviour (and/or the parents' behaviour or conduct (or the behaviour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 School reserves the right to amend the way in which Bursary awards are assessed.

Requests for financial support usually fall into two categories:

- New applicants to the School where parents are unable to fund the fees (and other educational expenses) but the student has met the other requirements to be offered a place at the School. Parents who know that they will be unable to afford School Fees should always apply for a Bursary Award ahead of the student sitting Entrance Exams and before accepting a place offered at the School.
- Existing students where a change in the student's and/or parents' circumstances has resulted in difficulty in meeting fees and other educational expenses and may result in the student being withdrawn part way through a stage of their 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 School families.

### **The Bursary Award Committee**

Assessment of Bursary applications and awards, as well as oversight of the total level of Bursary Awards funded by the School is delegated to the Bursary Awards Committee. The Bursary Award Committee comprises the Chair of Governors, Chair of the Finance and General Purpose Committee, a representative of Reading Blue Coat School Charitable Trust, Head and the Bursar. The Committee is supported by the Secretary to the Bursar and Committee meetings are also attended by the Director of Marketing and Admissions and the Foundation Director as observers.

### **New Applicants to the School**

#### *Awareness*

Information provided by the School alerting parents of prospective students to the possibility of gaining means-tested financial support with the payment of School fees and other educational expenses is included:

- On the School’s website
- At the launch of each admission round, parents will be asked to request an initial screening application form if they wish to apply for a Bursary
- Via promotion by the School’s Foundation Office.

#### *The Application Process*

Bursaries may be made available to parents of students entering *years 7, 9 and 12* at the School. See the School’s *Admissions Policy* for further information on the School’s entry criteria. They are awarded at the discretion of the Bursary Award Committee and the Head and Bursar have overall responsibility for the management and coordination of the process.

The steps to applying for a bursary are as follows:

- New applicants to the School seeking a Bursary are first directed to the Admissions team. The Admissions team will send a basic financial questionnaire to the parents to provide an initial screening of applications that are eligible for a Bursary. If they meet the basic criteria of eligibility for a Bursary (based on their basic financial circumstances) then the parents will be sent a full Bursary Application Form.
- Both parents seeking a Bursary are required to complete the Application Form which seeks to establish the identity and financial circumstances of the family and of each parent. In the event both parents are separated and/or divorced, financial information from both parents should still be provided. We may ask for the financial information of any other adults in the same household of either of the parent who may be able to contribute towards the student’s School fees. The Application form requests details of all income, savings and capital must be accompanied by full documentary evidence.
- Both parents seeking a bursary will be required to sign a declaration as part of the Application Form stating that the information they have provided is both accurate and complete as well as requiring, in the event their application for a bursary is successful, them to update the School in the event those circumstances change during the academic year in question. If any information provided in the application, or as part of the broader assessment process, is subsequently discovered to be false or misleading or incomplete, the School may withdraw any award which has been made with immediate effect and, depending on the circumstances may require reimbursement. The School may also terminate its parent contract (Terms and Conditions) and require the removal of the child in such circumstances.
- Failure to provide full disclosure along with the relevant documented evidence will result in the application for a Bursary Award being refused.

- For new students the completed Bursary Application Form must be submitted no later than **1 December**.
- After these dates the availability of funds may be curtailed. Parents are strongly recommended to apply as early in the year as possible, but not before 1 September, to allow time to process applications.
- The School uses an external organisation to assist with processing bursary applications, including making home visits or telephone interviews. Information provided by applicants may be made available, in confidence, to that organisation for those purposes. All personal data processed in connection with the School's arrangements for bursaries shall be processed in accordance with the School's privacy policy which is available on the School's website and is otherwise available from the School upon request.
- The application is considered by the Bursary Award Committee and their assessment includes the Application Form, a report from the external bursary processing organisation and any other information provided by the Bursary Award Committee members and Observers. The award committee / may request further information to inform their deliberations.
- Following completion of both the Entrance and Bursary Assessment processes the parents/guardians are advised whether their child is to be offered a place at the School and the level of Bursarial assistance offered at the same time.
- No Bursary Award will be considered for incoming Year 7 students outside the process involving the Bursary Award Committee. Parents who know that they will be unable to afford School Fees should always apply for a Bursary Award ahead of the student sitting Entrance Exams and before accepting a place offered at the School. Parents/guardians are then required to formally accept the place at the School and the conditions relating to the Bursary.
- All decisions by the Committee are final and there is no right to appeal.
- In the event a student is not awarded a Bursary (or a Bursary is awarded at less than 100%) but does accept a place then fees will be payable in full at the level charged and there will be no consideration of providing bursarial support in all but the most exceptional circumstances (such as death, critical illness, unemployment etc) for the foreseeable future.

### *The Case for Assistance*

The Bursary Award Committee will consider a number of factors when making the judgement as to the justification for support and the extent of such support; inevitably this is a holistic judgment. In the main, the student's suitability for the School is the first consideration in granting support.

- Suitability - in assessing a student's suitability, attention will be given to their academic assessment results in accordance with the School's published entry criteria. Bursary funds are limited and those judged most suitable will be given priority as those likely to gain most from the School's educational provision. Each student to whom support is offered must, in the opinion of the head, be likely to make good 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 School. Where available, previous School reports will be consulted for evidence of the student's attainment, progress and behaviour.
- Financial limitations - the amount of the bursary award is not influenced by the student's academic ability but by the extent of need. Each case is assessed on its own merits and awards are made subject to the School's ability to fund these within the context of its overall budget. 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 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 (but are not limited to):
  - The ability to improve the financial position or earning power of each parent. 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 school age or other 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 School fees, as would equity values in property assets.
- In cases of parents who are divorced or separated, the contribution that is being made or could be made by both parents, regardless of who the child lives with, and based on the principle that liability for the fees is joint and several. This means that the School may consider the financial circumstances of each parent separately and together, treating each parent's household separately.
- The number of school aged children in the household.
- Contribution to household costs including School fees by other family members, any adults unrelated to the child or by third parties / outside sources.
- Any fees which are being paid to other schools (or universities).
- Acknowledging that others might have a different view, the School considers that the following would not be consistent with the receipt of a bursary. It should be noted that the list is not comprehensive:
  - frequent or expensive holidays;
  - new or luxury cars;
  - investment in significant home improvements;
  - a second property/land holdings;
  - paying full School fees for a sibling at another School;
  - failure to honour School fee payments to other schools.
- Other factors - it is recognised that, in addition to meeting academic requirements and financial constraints, there may be other circumstances which should be considered as part of the School's holistic judgment. These include:
  - Where a student has siblings at the School, although only in exceptional circumstances will a Bursary Award be considered for a sibling where one is already being provided.
  - Where the social needs of the student are relevant (for example, where a student is suffering from bullying at their present school).
  - Where a parent is critically or terminally ill or is unable to secure permanent employment due to poor health or incapacity.
  - Where a separation has resulted or is likely to result in the student having to be withdrawn from the School, adding to the stress of coping with the parents separating, although the School will nonetheless consider the financial circumstances of both parents in such cases.
  - Where a previous school has awarded bursary support (but please note that bursary support from a previous School is no indication or guarantee that the parents would be eligible for bursary support at Reading Blue School.

### **Existing Students - Change in Family Circumstances**

Within overall budget funding, the School will in normal circumstances 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 bursaries. This sum will be set within budgetary constraints. Parents with a student at the School whose financial circumstances suddenly change may apply for a hardship award to the Bursar, explaining their situation. In most cases, applicants will be required to complete the same application process as for new students to the School (e.g. complete the Application Form and declaration and potentially be assessed by an external organisation) and the level of award will be assessed by the Bursary Award Committee.

The exact process will be decided on a case-by-case basis and depend on the urgency of requirements and parental circumstances. Such awards are subject to the availability of funding and cannot be guaranteed.

If parents continue to require financial support in subsequent years, they will be required to submit repeat means-testing forms in the same way as other bursary holders.

### **Periodic Review**

All bursary awards are subject to repeat consideration of the student's and each parent's financial circumstances on at least an annual basis (generally every two years) and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on the outcome of any review. This process will normally take place at the same time as assessment of bursary applications for new students and follows the same procedures in relation to provision of information and assessment by the Bursary Award Committee.

For those previously in receipt of bursaries, the Head and the Bursar, have the discretion to recommend to the Committee the reduction or withdrawal of an award not only where a student's progress, attitude, attendance or behaviour has been unsatisfactory but also where the parents have failed to support the School, for example by the late payment of any contribution they are making to the fees or by otherwise not acting in accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions, or otherwise in accordance with the terms of the award or the School's Terms and Conditions.

### **Bursary Administration**

The School's bursary process is administered by the Secretary to the Bursar who can be contacted at [cmw@rbc.org.uk](mailto:cmw@rbc.org.uk).

All formal applications will be acknowledged in writing and parents are advised to ensure that the Bursar or the Secretary to the Bursar acknowledge receipt of their Application Form.

### **Confidentiality**

The School respects the confidentiality of bursary awards made to parents and recipients and prospective recipients are expected to do likewise.

### **Other Sources of Bursary Assistance**

In addition to the School's bursary fund, 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 School and due to a change of circumstances may be unable to remain. Reading Blue Coat encourages parents to apply for support where it is felt a good case can be made for assistance. Further information on how to pursue such assistance may be obtained from:

The Bursar (Email: [bursar@rbc.org.uk](mailto:bursar@rbc.org.uk))

The Educational Trusts Forum

Website: [www.educational-grants.org](http://www.educational-grants.org)

Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation

Website: <https://www.royalspringboard.org.uk/>

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