SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL
SINCE 1576

Bursary Policy

(Prep School and Senior School)

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Policy Date: September 2025
Approval Date by Governors: November 2025
Review Date: September 2026

This Policy applies to Sutton Valence School (including as the context requires, the Nursery, the Prep School and Senior School).

Overview

The Governors of Sutton Valence School are committed to two strategies to encourage excellence and widen access to the School by offering to eligible parents/guardians:

a) **Scholarships and Exhibitions:** Based entirely on merit, resulting in reductions in fees (see separate information), and not linked to ability to pay. Pupils in receipt of Scholarships and Exhibitions may apply also for means-tested bursaries;

b) **Bursaries:** Means-tested financial support. Bursaries may be awarded depending on the financial or other pertinent circumstances of applicants.

Bursaries are assessed and awarded in relation to financial need and eligibility and may be varied up or down depending on individual parents'/guardians' circumstances (eg income, savings, investments, realisable assets, size of family, dependants, etc), compassionate or other relevant considerations.

The total level of financial support (bursary, scholarship and exhibition combined) will exceed 50% of fees **only in exceptional circumstances**.

Requests for financial support usually fall into three categories:

1. Existing pupils, where a change in parents'/guardians' circumstances has resulted in difficulty in meeting fees and may result in a pupil being withdrawn part way through a critical stage of education;

2. New applicants to the School, where a scholarship or exhibition has been offered but parents/guardians are unable to fund the full fees;

3. Pupils (new or existing) who do not meet the standard for an award of a scholarship or exhibition but who would, nonetheless benefit from the School due to their social or educational need.

The Application Process

Bursaries are awarded at the discretion of the Governors' Bursary Committee in consultation with the Headmaster and Bursar, who manage and coordinate the process within the policy framework of the governors.

Step One: Parents who wish to apply for a bursary are required to complete an online application form that seeks to establish the financial circumstances of the household. The link to this form which requests details of income, capital and expenditure may be requested by emailing the Finance Manager, Anita Carr, at carra@svs.org.uk.

Once completed, the form is then submitted to the Bursary Administration Limited (BAL) who will contact the applicant to arrange a home visit and/or telephone interview. This is to ensure that all information supplied has been correctly interpreted and the basis of the financial assessment has been fair. Once BAL has competed its assessment it will submit a report to the School.

Step Two: The Headmaster and Bursar assess all applications and prepare a recommendation which is then considered by the Governors' Bursary Committee (that sits termly) and a decision reached.

Step Three: The parents/guardians are advised whether their child is to be offered a bursary.

Step Four: Parents/guardians are then required to sign a letter accepting the place at the School and agreeing to any conditions relating to the bursary.

The Case for Assistance

The Bursary Committee will consider a number of factors when making the judgement about support, and the extent of such support. In the main, the School will always seek first to support existing pupils in cases of sudden, unforeseen need.

Suitability

In assessing a child's suitability, consideration will be given to each child's ability to benefit from the total curriculum offered by the School, 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 Headmaster, 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, co-curricular activities on offer at the School. Previous school reports will be consulted for evidence of good behaviour.

Financial Limitations

Each case is assessed on its own merits and awards are made accordingly, subject to the School's ability to fund these within the context of what is viable. The Bursary fund is not a large fund, so the School is mindful that bursaries must be regulated carefully and costs controlled closely. It is recognised that judgements about what sacrifices a family could make to pay school fees will be personal. But in all cases parents will agree to inform the School of any changes in their financial circumstances that affects their ability to contribute more or less to the fees.

The School has a duty, however, to ensure that all bursary grants are well focused: 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 exceptional circumstances exist;

- Opportunities to release any capital. Significant capital savings and investments would be expected to be used for the payment of school fees, as might equity value in houses if realisable;

- 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 by outside sources;

- Where fees are being paid to other schools, the School's bursary grant will take into account all these outgoings;

The School considers that the following examples would not normally be consistent with the receipt of a bursary:

- Significant available equity in property;

- Frequent or expensive holidays;

- New or luxury cars;

- Investment in significant home improvements.

Other Factors

It is recognised that, in addition to academic ability and financial constraints, there may be other circumstances that may be considered. These include:

- Where the social needs of the child are relevant;

- Other family or domestic circumstances;

- The School's particular educational provision.

Existing Pupils: Change in Family Circumstances

Within overall budget funding, the School will in normal circumstances seek first to support existing pupils in cases of sudden, unforeseen need. Parents/guardians with a child at the School whose financial circumstances change suddenly may apply for a bursary to the Bursar, explaining their situation and using the statement of financial circumstances. Such awards are subject to the availability of funding and cannot be guaranteed.

New Applicants to the School

Awareness
Information is provided by the School to alert parents/guardians of potential pupils to the possibility of gaining means-tested financial support with the payment of school fees. This is included in:

- The School's website;

- Discussion with feeder schools in both the maintained and independent sectors.

Annual Review

All bursary awards are subject to repeat testing of parental means. This is normally undertaken on an annual cycle and financial support may be varied up or down depending on parental circumstances. Bursary holders can expect to be issued with repeat means-testing forms each year. For those in receipt of bursaries, the Bursary Committee has the authority to reduce or withdraw awards not only where pupils' progress, attitude or behaviour have been unsatisfactory, but also where parents/guardians have failed to support the School, for example by the late payment of any contribution they are making to the fees.

There is no obligation on the School's part to increase the percentage should income fall; in this situation, each particular case will be judged on its merits.

Confidentiality

The School respects the confidentiality of bursary awards made to families. Recipients are expected to do likewise.