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Bursary Policy

1. Bursaries

Ringwood Steiner School is committed to providing children with an inspiring alternative education for a changing world. The School expects all parents/guardians, staff, volunteers and our extended community to share this commitment.

One of the ways in which we do this is by providing a **Bursary** to those who may otherwise not be able to afford the education. The collective contributions made by the school community enable us each year to provide a total discount (Bursary, sibling or staff discounts) of up to 20% of the school's annual net fee income to children at our school.

The 20% figure is based on the average allocation to bursaries via other Waldorf Steiner Schools in the UK.

We offer bursaries on the principle that it is the last resort for funding of school contributions. Applicants must consider all other possible sources of funding before turning to the school.

We have a limited budget for bursaries. Priority will be given to current recipients of a Bursary, then to other families in the school, then to new applicants. However, applications received after our stated deadlines will lose any priority status. In any event, the school reserves the right of absolute discretion in the provision of a Bursary.

A Bursary is granted for up to one year; at the end of that year, everyone who needs a Bursary for the next year will have to reapply and will be expected to gradually increase their financial contribution to the school. A Bursary for the following year can only be awarded if all contributions and fees for the current year have been fully paid.

If a family's circumstances improve during the year, we expect that they will voluntarily increase their payments to the school accordingly; bursaries are for those who really need them.

1.1 Authority

This policy has been authorised by the Board of Trustees and the School Leadership and Management Teams, and contains an overview of the Bursary Scheme which is in operation at the School. Ancillary documentation includes a Bursary Application Form and Financial Contributions Policy, which are made available on request to the Bursar/Finance Department. In exceptional circumstances the limit stated above may be exceeded if the School Management Team so decides.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- A. to widen pupil access to the School and ensure that Steiner/Waldorf education is provided to children from as broad a socioeconomic spectrum as possible from financial, ethnic and religious backgrounds within society;
- B. to continue the School's long tradition of providing public benefit;

C. to meet the Charity Commission's public benefit requirements.

3. Introduction

The School has a long history of providing financial assistance to pupils and their families. While the costs of running the School require that those who can pay full fee contributions should do so, every year the School forgoes fee contributions through bursaries.

The School works with local authorities where they provide Early years funding for a limited number of hours per week for children between the ages of 3 - 5 years. At the end of the term of the child's 5th birthday this currently ceases. This provision is subject to the implementation of any changes instigated by local and central government that the School has no control over.

The School's Bursary Scheme is designed to assist parents on low incomes who, for financial reasons, might otherwise be unable to continue to send their child to the School. Bursaries for pupils of parents experiencing financial hardship or whose financial position worsens unexpectedly once their child is already at the School can apply. Their request will be considered only when there is adequate Bursary Funding still available.

Bursaries are entirely means-tested and are awarded on an annual basis to parents who are financially eligible and who meet the application requirements set out below in full. There are times when applications may not be successful due to a full allocation of Bursary funding. Any decisions by the Finance Group are final.

All Bursary applications are treated in the strictest confidence. Pupils will not be made aware that they benefit from a Bursary unless informed by their parents.

4. Eligibility and Procedure

All parents/guardians of pupils at the School are eligible to apply for a Bursary and should contact the Finance Department at the School in the first instance for more information. The deadline for Bursary applications will be published on the school website each year. Applications must be made in writing with a completed Bursary Application Form together with all supporting documentation.

Step One

All applicants for a Bursary need to complete a Financial Means Questionnaire (Bursary Application Form). The questionnaire is designed to provide a full picture of the income, assets, outgoings, and liabilities of applicants so that the Bursar can make recommendations to the Finance Group to determine those to whom an offer of a Bursary would be appropriate.

Step Two

The Bursar assesses all applications in order to establish the likely level of support which will be required in order to allow the child to attend the School. After consideration of the application, an Finance Meeting with the parents/guardians with a member of the Finance Group will be arranged. Copies of the full supporting documentation for the Bursary application needs to be provided before it will be considered, and will be returned to the parents/guardians at the meeting. This Finance Meeting is a mandatory part of the Bursary application process.

Step Three

Upon completion of the Finance Meetings, the Bursar prepares a recommendation for the School Finance Group's consideration and a decision on the application will be made.

Step Four

The school will aim to write within 21 days of the decision of the School Finance Group to notify applicants whether they have been successful but please bear in mind this may not always be possible.

Step Five

Successful applicants are required to confirm the acceptance of a Bursary by completing, signing and returning an Contribution Form to the School within 7 days. A Commitment Form agreeing to any conditions relating to

the Bursary must also be signed. N.B. This may be at the Finance Meeting in anticipation of a positive decision from the School.

IMPORTANT

Each Bursary offer will reflect the particular circumstances of the recipient and usually be expressed as either a percentage reduction of requested fee contributions or actual annual payment. **All Bursaries are awarded for one academic year** only and remain subject throughout that period to the conditions of award provided with the Commitment Form. It is incumbent on the parents or guardians to advise the School immediately if their financial position improves or changes when they might be able to reduce their Bursary for the benefit of other children that may be in need. Failure to do so could result in the withdrawal of part, or all, of the family's Bursary.

6. Financial Limitations

The amount of the Bursary award is influenced by the extent of need. Each case is assessed on its own merits and awards are made accordingly, subject to the School's ability to fund these within the overall Bursary budget. It is recognised that judgments about what sacrifices a family should make to pay school contributions will be personal to that family. However, the School has a duty to ensure that all Bursary grants are allocated appropriately and so, as well as current earnings, other factors will be considered in determining the level of any bursary grant to be awarded.

These will include (but are not limited to):

- The ability to improve the financial position or earning capacity 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 school age or other dependents, or the requirements of their partner's work.
- Assets.
- Opportunities to release any capital.
Significant capital savings and investments would be expected to be used for the payment of school contributions, as would equity values in houses.
- In cases of separation, contributions made by both parents.
- Fees 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:

- Frequent or expensive holidays.
- Investment in significant home improvements / significant purchases of luxury items.
- New or luxury cars.
- Other significant discretionary expenditure.

7. 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 a child has siblings at the School.
- Where the social needs of the child need to be taken into account.
- Where a parent/guardian is unable to secure permanent employment due to health problems or disability within the family.
- Where a parental separation or parental bereavement may result in the child having to be withdrawn from the School.
- The way the family supports school life and the Waldorf ethos.
- Bursaries are not normally granted to families who experience a reduction in income out of choice (for example, by giving up a job to start their own business or by moving to a lower paid job).

8. Change in Family Circumstances

Within the overall Bursary budget, the School will under normal circumstances endeavour to assist in cases of sudden, unforeseen need. This sum will be set within budgetary constraints. Parents/guardians with a child at the School whose financial circumstances suddenly change are advised to discuss the matter with the Bursar. Such support is always subject to the availability of the funding and cannot be guaranteed.

9. Review

All bursaries are subject to annual means-test review and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on financial circumstances. Should any of the information disclosed in response to the questionnaire change at a later date, or where the ability to pay the School Contribution changes, the School must be informed without delay. (See **RWS Finance Policy for details**).

10. Confidentiality

The School respects the confidentiality of Bursaries awarded to families, and recipients are expected to do likewise.

Ringwood Waldorf School

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