



LEWESTON
SHERBORNE

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

Like many other private schools Leweston offers limited financial assistance in the form of scholarships and bursaries to pupils who are either very able or can demonstrate the need for monetary support.

The process for applying for financial assistance is distinct to the school but this booklet is designed to offer families some general advice about navigating the payment of fees and bursary system.

What is a bursary?

Bursaries enable capable children of less well-off families – those who would otherwise not be able to afford the fees – to attend private school. They are nearly always means-tested; a process which sees the family undergo a thorough investigation of their financial circumstances by the school bursar or an external auditing company. Whilst this might feel intrusive means-testing ensures that the funds available are going to the families that need them.

Your income is just one of the things that will be checked. Schools may well look at the value of your assets and assess other outgoings such as holidays. They also take into consideration other financial commitments such as the number of children or other dependents. Each school has its own rules and ways of making their decisions

At Leweston all bursaries are means-tested and awarded at the discretion of the Bursary Committee based on an agreed formula and criteria. Our assessment of how much help you need will take into consideration all your financial circumstances. As well as income and savings, we will also consider assets, including the family home, second properties and outgoings.

All enquiries and applications are handled in confidence. Your details will only be known by the small team that process and assess your application. Bursary awards are kept confidential throughout a child's time with us and families who receive an award are expected to maintain the same levels of confidentiality. Any breach of confidentiality may result in the loss of any Bursary awarded.

What sort of pupils are successful?

Every school has its own criteria for bursary applications but at Leweston the pupils likely to be successful at application will have a strong academic record and are likely to have other interests and talents, such as (but not exclusively) sport, music or drama, which will help them make the most of the opportunities here.

Many bursary applicants are attending an independent school for the first time and we are experienced at helping pupils and their families settle quickly into our community. The majority of our awards are for day pupils and for that reason a large number are made to pupils from the surrounding area.

Can existing pupils apply?

Some schools have 'hardship funds' which offer support to families where there are cases of sudden, unforeseen need from current pupils. Usually the best first step is to approach the Bursar explaining the situation. If you are experiencing difficulty meeting the fees engage with the school as soon as possible.

Emergency support is subject to the availability of funding and cannot be guaranteed. In addition, a pupil's progress, attitude and behaviour at the school will be taken into account.

What is the typical value of a Bursary?

The value of bursaries can vary widely from 5% to 100% of fees depending on each school's policy and available funds. Some of the older public schools can give substantial bursaries as they have access to long-standing legacies or endowments which boost the bursary funds. Other schools, like Leweston, are supporting families from fee income.

Our bursaries can take many forms but are typically worth between 10-20% of the current day fees, this can rise to as much as 40% but only in exceptional circumstances.

What if I need more help?

If you need assistance beyond which the school can provide there are charitable grant-making trusts which can help but do be aware that these usually have strict criteria.

The 'social needs' typically recognised by grant-making trusts are usually:

- Boarding need, where the home environment is unsuitable because of the disability or illness of the parents or of siblings
- Unforeseen family disaster, such as the sudden death of the main earner when a child is already at school
- Need for continuity when a pupil is in the middle of a GCSE or A level course and a change in parental circumstances threatens their place at the school
- Need for special education where there is a genuine recognised learning difficulty which cannot be catered for at a state school.

The Educational Grants Advice Service may be able to help: 01932 865619 9am-11am, Monday to Friday or www.educational-grants.org

At what age can children apply?

Financial assistance is uncommon at prep school and Leweston does not offer scholarships or bursaries between Reception and Prep 6. If your child is not yet old enough to apply, you may wish to register an early interest and we will be in touch at a future date.

Pupils entering the Senior School or Sixth Form can apply for bursarial support.

Do I have to reapply every year?

Bursary awards are subject to annual review and each year parents are asked for a full financial disclosure. If your financial circumstances change during the course of the academic year you must tell us as soon as possible. Failure to do so could result in your award being withdrawn.

If your income or assets increase significantly, we may reduce the level of assistance we offer, or withdraw it completely, as we have limited funds available and it is important that they reach those most in need.

Am I likely to be successful?

If you are approaching a school about financial support it is important to be realistic, both about your child and your financial circumstances.

If your child is doing well at school and is sitting in the middle of the class, enjoying sport or music but not far and above their peers then they are probably not going to achieve a scholarship. If you have a significant income and comfortable lifestyle you are unlikely to be awarded a bursary. However, if your child is able, you are not in a position to pay full fees and you want an independent education then do some research. Find out schools in your area that offer fee assistance and what the criteria are.

You may want to consider the following advice:

- Be organised. If your child gets an offer of a place and you then decide to ask about bursaries, it may well be too late.
- Be honest. Answer all the questions without reserve, it is better in the long run.
- Don't pressure your child, approach scholarships and bursaries as a 'let's give it a try' exercise.
- No school owes you a bursary. You believe that your child would flourish at independent school but, in many cases, funds are limited and the school has difficult decisions to make. Showing understanding of the school's position enables the school to take a holistic view of yours.

What is a scholarship?

Almost all independent secondary schools offer scholarships in order to attract talented pupils. These are often highly competitive but are usually worth more in terms of recognition than financial value. The financial benefit of a scholarship is rarely worth more than 10 per cent of fees these days and often as little as £100 in vouchers for art supplies for an art scholar. However, scholars often have special privileges, extra coaching or tuition in their chosen discipline and additional trips, tours and mentoring for the duration of their time at the school.

Scholarships often come with requirements so take a look at the school's Scholarship Guidelines which will set out the criteria needed to apply.

Leweston offers scholarships to pupils joining in Years 7, 9 and 12. Awards are available for Academic Excellence, Art and Design, Drama, Music, Sport, Equestrian and Pentathlon. There is also a Boarding Scholarship available to pupils joining Years 9 and 12.

Our scholarships are not means tested and, as described, the awards given represent the honour rather than a significant monetary value. Scholarship candidates who require additional financial support can make bursary applications but applications must be made in full prior to the scholarship day so that any offer made considers both awards.

Successful scholars will receive priority in the allocation of bursaries but, depending on the requirement for assistance in any one year, it is not always possible to provide financial support to all scholars, even if their family's financial circumstances justify it.

What other fee reductions might be available?

Some schools offer discounts for siblings of existing students, and for parents who work in specific professions.

Sibling discounts are usually modest. At Leweston we offer the following discounts on the day fees:

- For two children attending Leweston, the second child receives 5% discount.
- For three children attending, the third child receives 10% and the second child receives 5% discount.
- For four children attending the fourth child receives 15%, the third receives 10% and the second child receives 5% discount.

The sibling discount commences when the second child joins Year One. This is because children in the Reception class

Many schools offer discounted fees for children of those serving in the armed forces. Leweston welcomes boarders who receive the Forces' Boarding Schools Allowance – Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA).

Some schools offer their own discounts, many based on historic links such as remissions for clergy or children from the local area.

Are there other ways to pay?

A significant number of schools now offer direct debit schemes which spread the cost of fees across the year. Leweston's scheme allows parents to pay in monthly instalments.

Payment can also be taken annually in advance and Leweston offers a pre-payment scheme which allows you to pay a lump sum to cover fees over a two year period at the fee rate when paid. This may benefit those in receipt of professional bonuses, or inheritance. Schools sometimes offer a discount for payment in advance so it is worth talking to the Bursar if this is an option. Payment in advance is also not just open to new parents but can be accessed at any time.

Consider your options

Whilst independent education costs money not all schools charge £40,000 a year – these higher fees are usually reserved for big-name boarding schools and more expensive does not always mean better. A famous name with high fees may not be the right fit for either your child or your bank balance.

Telegraph Money recently released a league table which compared fees to academic performance and Leweston was delighted to be awarded 'good' the only school in Dorset to achieve this.

So what happens next?

Once you have decided to engage with a school talk to them as early as possible about fee assistance. There will be important steps in the admissions process that you will need to be aware of.

As an example Leweston's application process is detailed opposite.

How we make the decision

In every application there are two separate decisions the school needs to make. Firstly, whether your child will be offered a place at the school and secondly, whether the school will offer help with fees and the value that support will take.

The offer of a place

Every child joining Leweston takes part in either an Assessment Day or individual Taster before being offered a place. They will also sit school assessment tests and meet staff.

The aim of the admissions process is to identify potential. Leweston looks to admit pupils who will benefit from our balanced and well-rounded education and make a positive contribution towards the life of the school. Bursary funds are limited and, all things being equal, priority will be given to those likely to gain most from our provision. Each pupil to whom support is offered must, in the opinion of the Bursary Committee, be likely to make sound academic progress and have the potential to develop, as well as benefit from participation in the wider, extra-curricular activities on offer. We will also look at what previous school reports say about your child's behaviour.

Stage One: Get in Touch

If you think you may need fee assistance please tell us when you enquire. Every year we receive more applications than we are able to grant. We can give you personal advice and answer any questions that you might have.

Stage Two: Visit

All prospective families are invited to visit us informally so that you can meet staff and pupils, as well as tour the school.

It's important that you have all the information you need so please ask any questions you have, and return for another visit if necessary. We can also arrange for you to meet specific members of staff, particularly the Bursar, who can help with any areas you wish to discuss.

Stage Three: Apply

Fill in our Registration Form and a Bursary Application Form to enter the application process. **It's important that we receive these forms together.** If you cannot submit both at the same time, you must let us know you wish to apply for fee assistance when you submit your Registration Form. We will check your application and ask for any further details or supporting evidence we need.

Stage Four: Evaluation

All applications are considered by our Bursary Committee. The Committee is responsible for the management and co-ordination of the application process.

In some cases it may be necessary to arrange a home visit by either a school representative or an outside agency to help assess the appropriate level of support.

The Bursary Committee typically meets in January and May to consider applications.

Stage Five: Offer

Once your application has been considered and your child has been through the appropriate assessment process we will contact you. If we offer a place, details of any bursary award will be included.

You will be sent a copy of our Bursary Conditions of Award and asked to formally accept the bursary offered.

The offer of help with fees

If we make an offer of financial support, how much we offer depends on the extent of your family's need. It does not depend on, and is not affected by, your child's academic or other performance. The following questions are typically considered when deciding on the level of award:

Does your family have the ability to improve its financial position?

For example, where there are two partners, we would expect both to be working in paid employment unless one is prevented from doing so through illness, or because one partner needs to care for very young children or other dependants.

Could you use funds that you already have?

If you have significant savings or investments, or have a lot of equity in your house, we would expect you to use this before we provide support.

Is your family's joint income level below £70,000 (gross)?

Where parents are separated, what contribution is made by the parent who does not have custody?

Do you have other sources of household income or family members who contribute to household costs?

Are you paying fees to other schools or universities?

The school expects bursarial support to be shared equitably between schools.

We would be extremely unlikely to grant a bursary if your family has:

- Frequent or expensive holidays
- New or luxury cars
- Investment in significant home improvements
- A second property

Other factors

We recognise that your family's full circumstances need to be taken into account when we assess your application. It's important you tell us if any of these, or similar facts, apply to you:

- Your child has brothers or sisters already at Leweston.
- There are specific social problems with your current schooling (for example, your child is being bullied).
- A parent is terminally ill or is unable to work due to poor health.
- Parents are separating or have recently separated and a bursary can help provide continuity.

If you would like to find out more about Leweston School or talk to our Registrar then please contact June Smith on 01963 211015 or email admissions@leweston.dorset.sch.uk



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