

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

Policy No.	AF1
Policy Category	Student and Parent Facing Policies
Name of policy	Financial Assistance with Fees Policy
Purpose of policy	To inform prospective and current parents about the process and parameters for financial assistance with fees.
Scope	Parents
Regulatory or legal requirement addressed by policy	None
Other policies referred to	Admissions Policy
Policy owned by	Bursar
Date effective from	September 2024
Published on website/external facing	Yes

1. Introduction and policy aims

- 1.1. Sevenoaks School has a long history of providing financial assistance to enable students of all backgrounds to benefit from the outstanding education it provides.
- 1.2. The School actively welcomes applications from children who would only be able to take up their place with financial assistance, as well as from families of existing students at the School who encounter financial difficulty due to a change in circumstances.
- 1.3. This policy is intended to set out the process and criteria to qualify for financial assistance 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 Assistant Director of Admissions, at financialassistance@sevenoaksschool.org.
- 1.4. Sevenoaks is an academically selective school, 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 School's Admission Policy which sets out the selection process in detail. For the avoidance of doubt, all applicants for financial assistance must also be successful in the academic selection process.
- 1.5. The School also offers scholarships for excellence in academic studies, music, art, drama and sport. However, the School has adopted a principle of needs-based assistance, and scholarships do not include any fee discount. Details of the process and criteria for scholarships can be found on the School's website.

2. Key principles

- 2.1. The School is a charity, and the funds for financial assistance come from donations and the school'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.
- 2.2. All awards of financial assistance are means-tested, which means parents (to include carers and legal guardians) are asked to answer detailed questions and provide evidence of their financial circumstances.
- 2.3. A Financial Assistance Panel ('the Panel') reviews each case individually and may award a discount ranging from 5% to 100% of tuition fees. Students in receipt of financial assistance receive some additional support from the school to help with additional costs such as trips or clubs. Whilst the Panel is 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 falls within the parameters. All decisions are at the Panel's discretion and are final.
- 2.4. Families who are awarded financial assistance are required to inform the School as soon as possible and 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 School. If a family's circumstances have changed significantly, the level of the award may be adjusted accordingly.
- 2.5. In the event that an application for financial assistance demonstrates an inability to pay the fees, yet assistance is not awarded for whatever reason, the School reserves the right (in accordance with the Parent Contract) to withdraw the child's place.
- 2.6. It is important that families are honest and open about their circumstances, and fully disclose all relevant information. If the Panel have reason to believe a parent has withheld or provided misleading information for whatever reason, no financial assistance will be awarded, any existing award may be withdrawn, and (in accordance the Parent Contract) the child's place at the School may be withdrawn.

3. Applying for financial assistance on entry to the School

3.1. Families of new applicants to the School in any year group may apply for financial assistance on entry.

3.2. Whilst a family's financial circumstances are an important part of the decision-making process, there are a range of other factors that are also taken into consideration. The following list is provided as a guide to help families decide whether to apply for assistance, although it is important to understand that meeting these parameters does not guarantee assistance will be awarded.

- **Location:** Priority will be given to families living within a reasonable daily commute of the School. As guidance this is generally considered to be a commuting time of 45 minutes.
- **Both parents working:** Financial assistance will normally only be awarded where both parents are working and contributing to the household income, unless incapacitated or providing full-time care for pre-school age children or other dependants. In the case of separation or divorce, both parents would normally still be expected to contribute financially to their child's education and participate fully in the application for financial assistance.
- **Finances being responsibly managed and prioritising education:** A family applying for financial assistance 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. Assistance is unlikely to be awarded where families have prioritised expenditure on other activities ahead of their child's education, such as frequent or expensive holidays, new or luxury cars, significant home improvement works, or significant voluntary donations to other charitable causes.
- **Combined household income (before tax):** As a guide, combined income up to £68k would likely be considered for a free place. Combined income up to £130k would likely be considered for assistance, with the level depending on other factors. Combined income up to £190k could still be considered for a small amount of assistance in certain circumstances.
- **Property:** The level of equity held may impact the level of financial assistance offered, depending on other factors. Assistance is unlikely to be awarded where a family holds equity of more than £580k or owns a property of similar value outright with no mortgage, or owns more than one property.
- **Savings and other assets:** The level of assistance is likely to be reduced where a family has savings or investments of more than £12k for a one-child family, £18k for a two-child family, or £24k for three or more children. Assistance is unlikely to be awarded where the family hold significant assets but are temporarily unable to access funds, although the School may be able to offer a payment plan in such cases. A family must declare all assets including assets held overseas. The means-testing conducted by the School will include an international search.
- **Siblings and other school fees:** Where a family already pays fees for a child at Sevenoaks School and subsequently applies for financial assistance on entry for a sibling, any assistance will be awarded to the older sibling and will cease when the older sibling leaves the School. Where a family already pays fees for a sibling at another school, it would be expected that the family would contact the school to request that financial assistance is shared between the two schools, rather than provided only by Sevenoaks School.

4. The process of applying for financial assistance on entry to the School

4.1. Open Mornings and Group Visits for Year 7 and 9 entry are held throughout the year, when families are welcome to come and look around the School, talk to teachers, chat with existing students and Admissions staff. Details are [available here](#). Families are also very welcome to come for an individual visit which can include a discussion of potential financial assistance. Please contact the [Registrar](#) or the [Sixth Form Registrar](#) to arrange.

4.2. Applications for financial assistance must start with the Admissions application form, available [here](#). The form must be submitted by the normal deadlines as specified on the Admissions section of the

School website. Earlier application is recommended to maximise the time to complete the means-testing process. Late applications for financial assistance will not normally be considered.

- 4.3. After submitting the online application, you will receive a series of Confirmation of Registration forms, on which you are asked to indicate whether you wish to apply for financial assistance. You will then be contacted to arrange means-testing, which involves answering detailed questions and providing evidence of your family's financial circumstances, and meeting with an independent assessor.
- 4.4. We appreciate that undergoing the means-testing process requires considerable time and effort and can feel intrusive. Therefore, before embarking on the process, we strongly recommend that families consider the academic suitability of their child. Admission is by the School's competitive examinations, a group discussion activity, and a reference from the candidate's current school. Examples of our past papers can be found on our website as a guide. You can contact the [Registrar](#) or [Sixth Form Registrar](#) should you have any further questions about academic suitability. You may withdraw at any time from the process of applying for financial assistance by contacting the [Registrar](#) or [Sixth Form Registrar](#).
- 4.5. We aim to notify parents of the outcome of a financial assistance application before the results of the admissions tests are communicated. To assist us in this, it is important that you provide the requested information by the given deadline and accommodate the assessor's request for a meeting.
- 4.6. You may be awarded financial assistance representing from 5% to 100% of the tuition fees. If any financial assistance is awarded, we will also reimburse the registration fee, whether or not your child is offered a place. For families in receipt of free school meals, we will waive the registration fee at the outset. Please contact financialassistance@sevenoaksschool.org to discuss.
- 4.7. If the assessor or the School has reason to believe that you have provided inaccurate, incomplete or misleading information, your child's place may be withdrawn.

5. Applying for financial assistance for a current student due to a significant change of circumstances

- 5.1. Families of existing students 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 same applies to families who have accepted a place and are due to join the School within 6 months.
- 5.2. The first step is to contact financialassistance@sevenoaksschool.org as soon as possible-with a written submission setting out the significant change in circumstances, and indicating what level of financial assistance might be needed and for how long. The School may arrange for means-testing to provide 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.

6. Alternative sources of financial assistance

- 6.1. The School encourages parents to seek advice and financial assistance from other sources, in particular via the [Educational Trusts' Forum](#), which is an association of educational charities that work to give young people the best start in life including financial assistance. Each charity is independent and has its own criteria for making awards, although in some cases two or more charities may pool resources.