



**Biggleswade**Academy

# Hardship Fund Policy

Document Detail	
Approved	September 2021
Approved by	Trust Board
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## **What is the Hardship Fund?**

The Hardship Fund is a discretionary source of financial help available to all registered full-time Academy pupils. The aim of the Fund is to help pupils who have difficulties in paying for:

1. Curriculum trips, visits and year group residential
2. Uniform, shoes or sports kit
3. Other materials or equipment required for their academic studies
4. Music tuition

If approved, the financial assistance provided will consist of a contribution of 30% of the costs, up to a maximum contribution of £100 per pupil per academic year unless specifically approved by the Principal.

Requests for financial assistance are subject to the funds being available.

Payments from the Fund are discretionary and if awarded do not need to be repaid.

### **The Academy will consider requests for hardship funding from the following groups of students:**

- pupils in receipt of free school meals
- pupils in families with very low incomes
- pupils with disabilities
- pupils who are or have been in care/foster care
- pupils who have been subject to other exceptional circumstances

### **Your child may be eligible for grants from our hardship fund if:**

- Their attendance is in line with the school policy
- A student whose parents are currently claiming other means-tested benefits including Income Support, Working Tax Credit/ Child Tax Credit, Income Based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit, who is not entitled to free school meals
- At the decision of the Principal, any pupil who does not fall under the categories listed above, but consider themselves to be in financial hardship

### **Proof of benefit is required, even if the pupil is already registered for Free School Meals or eligible for Pupil Premium. Proof must be in letter form and:**

- Proof of benefit must have been issued within the last six months. Where applicable please provide a copy of the Full Tax Credit Award Notice (TC602).
- Proof must show the family address given
- Proof must be included with the grant application
- Bank Statements, incapacity, housing and council tax benefit are not valid proof.

### **Letters of Proof of Benefits can be obtained from:**

- Inland Revenue Child Benefit Office 0300 200 3100
- Inland Revenue Tax Credits 0345 300 3900

- Jobcentre Plus
- Jobseekers, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance 0800 169 0310
- Universal Credit 0800 328 9344
- Asylum Help UK 0808 8000 630

### **How to apply to the Hardship Fund**

An application should be made to the Hardship Fund Consideration Panel (the Panel). The application will remain confidential and will be considered by the Panel.

If approved in principle by the Panel, the recommendation will be reviewed by the Principal and then if authorised, it will be passed to the Academy Finance Manager to verify and action the transaction.

The Panel will consist of three members, drawn from:

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Progress Leader/Form Tutor
- Chief Financial Officer

If funds are approved, the payment will be made through the Academy internal financial system directly to the supplier by receipt of invoice for goods purchased.

An application for hardship support can be made at any time during the academic year.

Prior to making an application, all other avenues for reaching a satisfactory outcome must have been explored and exhausted. For example, parents/carers must make efforts to work with the Academy to see if any suitable items of uniform can be found in the school's bank of lost property, prior to making a request for funding for items of school uniform.

Decisions not to award a hardship grant cannot be appealed as the decision is final. In the exceptional circumstance of a dispute against the decision regarding a claim for financial support, this would follow the Academy's Complaints Policy and procedures.

### **Completed applications and any supporting information should be addressed to, 'Biggleswade Academy, Hardship Fund Consideration Panel'.**

- Applicants will be individually assessed by the Panel and before financial support is provided, documentary evidence will be required to support their applications.
- The financial application form (Appendix A) needs to be completed by parents/carers wishing to apply for financial assistance.
- In addition to completing this form it may be necessary to request further information, to help proceed with your application. Detailed information regarding personal/household finance will be required.
- Completing an application will not automatically result in funds being paid.
- The application form and any other supporting documentation will be held securely and treated in the strictest confidence.
- If an award of financial assistance is granted, it is to remain a confidential agreement between the Academy and the recipient.

**APPENDIX A:**  
**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION FORM** *(for Parents/Carers to complete)*

<b>Part 1: Personal Details</b>	
Pupils Name:	Form Group
Parents Name:	
Address	
Home phone number	
Mobile phone number	
Email Address	
<b>Part 2: Home Financial Circumstances</b>	
What is the total income in your main home?	£
	TICK
<b>Student is in receipt of Free school Meals</b>	<b>Student is not in receipt of Free school Meals</b>
	TICK
<i>Please briefly explain your family financial circumstance, indicating why your son/daughter should be considered for funding.</i>	

**Part 3: Documentation to Support the Application**

To support this application, please tick which of the following documentation you may be using as evidence of your total household income. Please attach this documentation to the application form.

- Certified accounts (if self-employed)
- Letter from the DWP awarding benefit
- Letter from the DWP acknowledging processing of benefit application
- P60
- Payslips (if you are paid monthly the most recent three months or, if weekly, the most recent four weeks)
- Pension
- SA 302 Form
- Tax Credit award notice

- Other means tested benefit

<b>Part 4: Funding</b>			
	Details	Amount of assistance requested £ <i>(please note the maximum usually agreed is 30% of the cost of a trip)</i>	Amount of assistance granted £
I wish to apply for assistance on the following items:			
field trip/school journey			
books and/or equipment			
uniform / PE Kit			
musical tuition			
other (please specify)			
<b>TOTAL</b>			
<p><b><i>PLEASE NOTE:</i></b> If successful, you will be asked to produce receipts or other evidence of expenditure at a later date or the amount will be paid on your behalf directly to the supplier</p>			
<p><b>Part 5. Declaration</b></p> <p>All of the information provided on this application form is accurate and no information has been withheld that would be relevant to my request for financial assistance.</p>			
<p>Signature of Parent/Carer: _____ Date: _____</p>			

**APPENDIX B:**  
**CONSIDERATION PANEL DECISION PROFORMA** (for the Panel to complete)

<b>Part 6. Financial Assistance - Consideration Panel (if Required)</b>
Panel Members Present:  1.  2.  3.
Date of application consideration:
Decision regarding the application:
Reasons for the decision being made:
Signatures of the Panel: 1.  2.  3.