

GSAL Bursary Policy

Rationale for the Policy:

This policy explains how the school's means-tested bursaries are made available for external candidates joining GSAL Senior School in Year 7 and 12.

Policy aim:**Author:**

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Agreed and Authorised by:

Committee and GSAL SLT

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The Grammar School at Leeds

Bursary Policy 2026-27

Principles

1. This policy has been developed in accordance with the FREDIE principles of Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement, as part of the National Centre for Diversity's framework.
2. The Grammar School at Leeds (the "school") and its two founding schools are committed to providing financial support through means-tested bursaries for academically talented children living in Leeds who are from low-income backgrounds. This reflects the fact that 20% of children in Leeds are living in poverty. Our bursary programme has an important role to play in improving social mobility and addressing longstanding inequality.
3. The school does not make financial awards solely on the basis of academic ability. Instead, it aims to direct bursary funding to families who are most in need, so that their child can fulfil their academic potential. The Principal reserves the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances.
4. On average, the school spends more than £1.2 million each year supporting more than 80 children through means-tested bursaries. Awards range from 100% to 5% of the full fee, depending on the family's financial circumstances. A small number of bursaries are awarded each year to families whose net assets are less than £85,000, taking into account household income and savings. Bursaries are funded by donors, charities, trusts, foundations and school funds. As a full bursary is worth more than £130,000 over seven years, the school has a rigorous process for deciding which families should receive bursary support.

Eligible pupils

5. Means-tested bursaries are available to external candidates joining the senior school in Year 7 or Year 12.
6. Demand for bursaries is high. Typically, there are around 10 applications for every bursary place.
7. A bursary application will only be considered when both of the following criteria are met:
 - The child demonstrates exceptional academic ability. For Year 7, this is assessed through the bursary examination and entrance examinations. For Year 12, it is assessed through GCSE grades and the admissions process.
 - The family has demonstrated financial need.

Academic criteria

Year 7 candidates

5. Bursary candidates will be working at greater depth in reading, grammar, punctuation, spelling, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Year 12 candidates

6. Bursary candidates will be expected to achieve mainly grades 7 or above in the majority of their GCSEs. They will also need to meet the subject-specific requirements for particular A-level subjects.

Means-testing criteria

7. Full or partial bursaries are offered according to a family's financial circumstances. Final decisions are based on the family's net disposable income: the amount available for spending or saving after income tax, national insurance and other relevant expenses have been paid.
8. The school offers only a small number of full bursaries. Typically, families applying for a full bursary will have income and savings of less than £25,000 per year, and they receive free school meals. To qualify for a partial bursary, gross income and savings from all sources must not exceed £85,000 per year.
9. Demand for bursaries greatly exceeds the funding available. As a result, the school cannot meet every request for bursary support, even when the eligibility criteria have been met.
10. To ensure impartiality and good governance, the school uses an independent company to assess the circumstances of families being considered for a bursary. Families will be asked to provide relevant financial records and answer questions about their financial history, current circumstances and ongoing commitments. The independent company will provide a confidential report to the school. The school has no input into, or control over, the findings of this independent financial assessment. The recommendations are final.
11. The value of a bursary is determined by the extent of financial need, not by the child's academic ability. Each application is assessed on its own merits, subject to the funds available each year.
12. Our overriding principle is to support families who are doing everything within their means to contribute towards school fees, however small that contribution may be. The school has a duty to its donors and other supporters to ensure that bursary funding is focused on families in greatest need.
13. When deciding whether to make a bursary offer, and the value of any award, we will consider a range of factors, including:
 - Current earnings
 - The family's ability to improve its financial position or earning power. For example, where there are two parents, both would normally be expected to work unless one is prevented from doing so by incapacity, caring responsibilities or the requirements of their partner's work.
 - Opportunities to release capital. Significant savings and investments would normally be expected to be used towards school fees, as would surplus equity in properties.
 - In cases of separation, the contribution made by the absent parent.
 - Contributions from others towards household costs, for example extended family members, other adults in the household or external sources.
 - Fees paid to other schools.
 - Families may receive only one GSAL bursary, even if another child is no longer attending the school.
 - If a family is receiving a bursary from another school which will continue into Senior School or sixth form, the family is not eligible to apply for a GSAL bursary.
 - The family's lifestyle.
14. To ensure that bursary funding is focused on families who are doing everything they can to contribute towards school fees, the following are considered inconsistent with receiving a bursary:
 - Significant savings.
 - A second property or land holdings.

- Frequent or expensive holidays or trips.
- Expensive cars.
- Significant investment in home improvements.
- Substantial remittances.
- Significant charitable giving.
- A child attending an independent school, including GSAL, on a full-fee place.

Additional criteria

15. Bursaries are extremely popular and demand for financial support exceeds the funding available. Depending on the value of the bursary required, additional criteria will therefore be applied:

- For bursaries of 75–100%, families must meet three or more of the criteria below.
- For bursaries of less than 75%, families must meet at least one of the criteria below.

16. Additional criteria:

- The child is care experienced.
- The child is a carer for one of their parents.
- The family lives in an area of Leeds affected by high levels of deprivation.
- The child's catchment-area secondary school has below-average academic attainment or does not have a sixth form.
- The child is from a group that has historically underperformed within the UK education system.
- Neither parent is a graduate.
- The child is eligible for free school meals.
- GSAL can better meet the child's needs than other schools.

Admissions process

17. The bursary admissions process is rigorous because bursaries are heavily oversubscribed and expensive to fund. We expect all families to be open and honest throughout the process so that bursaries are awarded to families who are eligible and most in need of support.

Stage 1 – Application

18. Families who wish to be considered for a bursary must complete all the following by 30 September 2026 for Year 7 candidates, and 30 November for Year 12 candidates:

- Submit an online application and pay the non-refundable £100 application fee.
- Complete and submit a financial declaration setting out income, expenditure and assets.
- Provide a supporting statement explaining why they are applying for a bursary.

19. If all these documents are not submitted by the relevant deadline, the bursary application will not be progressed, and the admissions process will end.

Stage 2 – Bursary examination (Year 7 candidates)

20. The bursary examination for pupils seeking to join the school in Year 7 in September 2027 will take place on Thursday 29 October 2026. Candidates will complete a series of online cognitive tests. No special preparation is required, as the tests are designed to assess each child individually.

21. The results will be used to rank candidates. The highest-performing pupils will be invited to continue with their bursary application and attend the main entrance examination and interviews in January 2027. Applications from pupils who do not meet the academic criteria for a bursary will not progress to the next stage.

Stage 3 – School reference, main entrance examination and pupil interview

22. The highest-performing pupils in the Year 7 bursary exam will be invited to attend the main entrance examination and interviews on Friday 15 and Saturday 16 January 2027. Candidates will take a number of online tests. We will ask the candidate's current school for a confidential reference.
23. Year 12 bursary candidates will sit our entrance examination and be interviewed on Saturday 16 January 2027. Candidates will take a number of online tests.
24. The Year 7 and Year 12 interviews help us to get to know the pupil, understand their interests and activities, and assess their suitability for GSAL. There are no right or wrong answers. We recognise that a child may not tell us everything that is relevant in an unfamiliar interview setting, so we consider the interview findings alongside the school report to build as complete a picture as possible.
25. We are looking for children who will be actively engaged in school life and are keen to learn. The current school's report will provide information about the child's academic achievement, behaviour and wider contribution to school life.

Stage 4 – Family meeting with the independent assessors

26. We aim to make a range of bursary offers so that we can support as many children as possible. We will therefore consider both the means-testing criteria and the candidate ranking when deciding which families should meet with the independent assessors to verify their financial eligibility.

Stage 5 – Family meeting with the Principal or Head of Senior School

27. After receiving the independent financial assessment report, the Principal or Head of Senior School will meet with those families who are being considered for a bursary.

Stage 6 – Offer

28. Candidates will be ranked using their performance in the bursary examination and main entrance examination and predicted grades for Year 12 candidates together with their school reference, interview performance, financial report and feedback from the meeting with the Principal or Head of Senior School. The highest-ranked candidates will receive an offer.

Bursary timeline – September 2027 entry

Activity	Date
Year 7 and 12 bursary information evening (virtual)	Tuesday 15 September 2026
Closing date for Year 7 bursary applications and supporting documents:	Wednesday 30 September 2026
- financial declaration and - supporting statement	
Year 7 bursary shortlisting exam	Thursday 29 October 2026
Closing date for Year 12 bursary applications and supporting documents:	Monday 30 November 2026
- financial declaration and - supporting statement	
Year 7 main entrance examination	Friday 15 January 2027
Year 7 interviews	Saturday 16 January 2027
Year 12 entrance examination and interviews	
Year 7 and 12 bursaries	February 2027
- Independent financial assessors meet families being considered for a bursary and send a confidential report to the school. - Virtual family meetings with the Principal or Head of Senior School	
Year 7 and 12 bursary offers distributed	March 2027
Year 7 and 12 bursaries deadline for accepting the place	April 2027

Bursary decisions

29. Demand for bursaries exceeds the funds available. Therefore, even if candidates meet the academic criteria, demonstrate that they meet the financial requirements, and meet the oversubscription criteria they may not be offered a bursary.
30. The school's decision on bursary offers is final. There is no appeals procedure. Applicants are responsible for providing true and accurate information throughout the application process.

Bursary terms and conditions

31. When accepting a bursary award, parents are bound by the terms and conditions that will be sent with the bursary offer. A bursary may be withdrawn or reduced if these terms and conditions are breached or if, in the opinion of the Principal, and following appropriate consultation and support, the child's progress, attendance, attitude or behaviour no longer merits continuation of the award.
32. Year 7 bursaries last for seven years to include GCSE and A-level study. Sixth form bursaries are for two years (Year 12 and 13) to cover A-level study. All bursary awards are reviewed annually to ensure that funding continues to support families in greatest need. Every year, parents of bursary holders will be asked to complete a means-testing form reflecting their current financial circumstances. They may also be required to meet with an independent company to verify the information provided.
33. The annual review may result in the bursary being increased, reduced or otherwise amended to reflect the family's circumstances and ability to pay.
34. The school reserves the right to review a bursary award at any time. For example, this may happen if information comes to light indicating that a family no longer meets the bursary criteria. In such circumstances, the school may seek to recover bursary funds that have been awarded.
35. Bursaries cover school fees only. Families are responsible for all other costs associated with attending the school, including transport, lunches and uniform.