Haberdashers' Academies Trust South

Hardship Fund Policy

Policy Details	
Policy Title:	Hardship Fund Policy
Last amendment date:	June 2025
Author:	Senior Director: Finance
Approved by:	Finance Committee
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Rationale

The schools within the Haberdashers' Academies Trust South (the 'Trust') often receive requests for financial support in respect of school trips, music tuition, school uniform, equipment, books, etc. To ensure equal opportunities for all Trust pupils particularly where parents/guardians are experiencing financial difficulties meeting such costs, and to allow their child to take part in these experiences, the Hardship Fund has been set up to assist. The budget for the Hardship Fund may be a combination of specific donations for hardship, additional unrestricted donations, proceeds from fetes etc. and may include an allocation of the Pupil Premium grant provided to the school and determined by the Principal.

The Hardship Fund is a discretionary fund that provides temporary relief from financial hardship for families. It supports pupils whose family circumstances mean that they would not otherwise be able to participate in educational trips and other school events.

In addition, it will also provide parents/guardians with support in obtaining the correct uniform, shoes or sports kit and other materials or equipment required by their child for their academic studies. It is a discretionary source of financial help available to all registered full-time Trust pupils. It will apply equitably to all pupils.

The 1996 Education Act requires all schools to have a policy on charging and remissions for school activities. Read this policy in conjunction with the Charging and Remissions Policy in respect of those activities and visits where parents/guardians can seek remissions from charges.

Scope

The intended scope of this policy applies to all Haberdashers' Academies Trust South schools.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to set out fair, equitable and objective criteria for approving such applications and to ensure affordability. The aim of the Fund is to help pupils who have difficulties in paying for:

- Out of school hours trips, visits and residential experiences where charges can be made
- financial support in respect of music tuition, school uniform, equipment, books, etc
- expenses to attend seminars, interviews or work experience placements
- emergency travel expenses

Payments from the Fund or remission of costs are discretionary, and if awarded do not need to be repaid.

Implementation

Each Trust school will consider requests for hardship funding from the following groups of pupils:

- Pupils living alone outside the family home
- Pupils in receipt of free school meals
- Pupils in families experiencing financial hardship
- Pupils with disabilities
- Pupils who are or have been in care

Parents/guardians must make a written request for support using the Hardship application form. The application will remain confidential and a member of the school senior leadership team will assess each one individually. After considering each pupil's current circumstances together with any prior applications, the member of the school senior leadership team will make a recommendation to the Principal for final approval of any payment.

In the case of applications relating to trips, visits or year group residential experiences, which attract charges, the Hardship Fund's contribution, if approved, may be a percentage of the total cost (rather than the full cost) and will be up to a maximum of £250 per application.

The Trust will make payment only in the following ways

- For emergency travel expenses the payment will be in cash or where appropriate in the form of travel cards or travel documents
- For all other expenses the payment will be made through the academy internal financial system or by receipt of invoice for goods purchased

Parents/guardians may make an application for Hardship support at any time during the academic year. However, pupils are generally limited to one application per academic year. The Trust will consider a second application if the hardship is extreme and would result in the pupil being disadvantaged.

Parents/guardians cannot appeal a decision not to award a grant to alleviate hardship, as the Principal's decision is final.

Communication

This policy is relevant to parents/guardians and all Trust staff. This document will be available on the Trust and schools' websites. Parents/guardians of those pupils who fall into the categories identified above, including all pupils entitled to free school meals who are likely to be the largest group, will be directed to this policy when the school is considering potential costs which may arise from a pupil continuing their education and participation in activities at the school.

Monitoring and evaluation

This is a Trust policy applied by each school in the Trust.

The School Business Managers will determine the funding available for their respective Hardship Fund based upon the budget agreed for each academic year. Each school will advise their Local Governing Body of the use of the Hardship Fund on an annual basis. The School Business Manager will submit a comprehensive report at the end of the academic year outlining as a minimum, the number, cost, age, ethnicity, previous access of those pupils in receipt of grants in the year from this fund.

This Trust will review this Hardship Fund Policy every year or earlier, if circumstances require, by the Trust Board or a delegated Committee of the Board.

Related documents

Parents/guardians should read this Policy in conjunction with the Trust Charging and Remissions Policy