

Financial Assistance FAQ

I am worried that my children won't fit in at a school like Sevenoaks.

Sevenoaks is a diverse school with students from a variety of nationalities, cultures, religions and backgrounds. We are proud of this diversity and actively encourage it. A significant number of our pupils receive means-tested financial assistance, and they all have places here, not only because of their academic abilities, but also because we believe they can bring something to the school. We are known for being a very friendly, welcoming school with a culture of kindness and mutual respect. We therefore trust that free and assisted place candidates would be accepted and integrated in the same way as all other students.

Will my child feel like the 'poor relation' in a school where most people pay fees?

Over five per cent of our students currently receive means-tested financial assistance, most of them free places. The school has been described as 'cosmopolitan and unstuffy', and money is rarely talked about, especially among the students. As we improve access to the school, social diversity will increase and we hope that children understand they are here on their own merits, rather than as a result of any particular financial status.

Does the school help with extra items like trips?

If your child is offered a free place, additional financial assistance is available to assist with ancillary costs. Depending on the level of need, this may be in the form of a termly allowance, and the free and assisted places committee will consider requests for additional assistance. Our parents' association runs a second-hand uniform shop selling good quality used school uniform.

Will everyone know that my child is receiving financial assistance?

Only a very small number of staff are aware of the identity of free or assisted place students, although sometimes it can become necessary to tell a particular teacher if it relates to the welfare or progress of the pupil. If free or assisted place students wish to be identified or to become ambassadors of the free and assisted places programme to encourage others to apply, this is welcomed.

What support is offered to help my child settle in and transition?

Your child will have an allocated tutor and a divisional head. Both will be made aware of your child's free or assisted place status, and their role will be to ensure your child is happy and settles well. Your child will have this tutor and divisional head for a number of years, so there will be continuity with the support they receive.

Will my child be able to cope academically?

Our application and testing process allows us to see potential as well as ability. The tests and interviews allow us to gauge whether a child will cope at Sevenoaks, and we only offer places to pupils who we think will thrive here.

Does my child have to be tutored to get in, as this isn't an option for us?

No, we do not expect children to be tutored. Our aim is to identify students with strong academic ability and potential, and not just a well-tutored candidate. We provide past entrance papers on our website, and we encourage candidates to do as many of these as possible, under timed conditions, in advance. We do not encourage children to receive significant amounts of tutoring to secure a place, as this can result in them struggling academically in the longer term.

What if my financial circumstances change?

Free and assisted places are awarded on admission to Sevenoaks, with the expectation that the award is set at the same level for the duration of your child's education. However, we do reassess family income annually, which allows us to adjust the size of the financial assistance if we see significant changes in family circumstances. We also reserve some funds to help parents paying full fees who suffer an unexpected major change in circumstances while their child is at Sevenoaks. Depending on need, they may apply for financial support as temporary assistance, or a free or assisted place can be set for the remainder of the child's years at the school.

What is the application process for a free or assisted place, and how long does it take?

The process of applying for a place is the same for all candidates, regardless of how their fees are to be paid. For those who need help with the fees, we ask for notification that you would like to be considered for a free or assisted place at the confirmation stage (pre-testing). We then undertake means testing, which includes a home visit from one of our representatives. You will be notified of the outcome of your application before the academic testing takes place. Please note, if the means test shows inaccurate or incomplete disclosures were made during the financial support application process then the pupil will be withdrawn from the application process. Unsuccessful applicants for free or assisted places will also be withdrawn.

What sort of information will we be required to provide?

The external team who assess our free and assisted places candidates will need details of all of your income and outgoings, assets and liabilities with verified proof of each. The proof will be examined during the home visit. The verified numbers, together with a written report, are sent to the school's free and assisted places committee, who make the final decisions.