



THE WREN

NURTURE · CHALLENGE · INSPIRE

Financial Support Fund (FSF)

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1. Overview

As a school, we want to make sure every family feels supported. If finances are a concern, please reach out to us – there may be helpful options available, including our Financial Support Fund.

The Financial Support Fund is a discretionary source of financial help available to **all students at The Wren**. The aim of the Fund is to help students who have difficulties in paying for:

- school uniform
- materials or equipment to support learning
- educational trips (to enhance learning but are not essential)
- other necessary expenses to help students thrive

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

Second hand uniform donations are welcome in school but can also be resold privately. Please contact us on fsf@wren.excalibur.org.uk for more details.

The [Charging and Remissions Policy](#), details what the school can charge for and what is requested as a voluntary contribution. Families do not need to apply to cover voluntary contributions.

The Wren reserves the right to withdraw the Financial Support Fund at any time and without notice.

To submit an application, please read this document fully and complete the e-form [here](#).

2. Practice and procedures

2.1 What support can families apply for?

Year 7-11 Students

- Free School Meals (FSM), we can check your eligibility. Please provide your Surname, Date of Birth and National Insurance number on our e-form [here](#). If eligible, this would offer your child a daily allowance of £2.60 to purchase a meal from the school restaurant during the lunchtime break.
- Further to FSM funding, the school receive additional funding called Pupil Premium which will be used to improve education outcomes for disadvantaged students.

We will hold this data confidentially, on the student's record so we can check eligibility automatically for you, without requesting the data again.

Year 12 and 13 Students

- 16-19 Bursary Students experiencing hardship in Years 12 and 13 should apply to the 16-19 Bursary Fund in the first instance. The school receives funding to help and support any student who faces financial barriers to participation in education and training, such as the costs of transport, food or equipment. To request the application form please email finance@wren.excalibur.org.uk.

Families do not need to be in receipt of FSM or 16-19 Bursary to make a Financial Support Fund application.

2.2 What is the eligibility to make an application?

The school will consider applications in relation to;

1. families in receipt of benefits which qualify for FSM: For more information on the eligibility for FSM please [click here](#).
2. families who have a very low overall family income
3. students who have disabilities
4. students who are in care, or who have left care
5. students who live alone/outside of the family home other financial difficulties

If you require financial support as per this guidance and do not fall into the categories above, please email FSF@wren.excalibur.org.uk to discuss your exceptional circumstances.

2.3 What “evidence” needs to be shown?

Formal evidence is not required at the application stage. We reserve the right to request evidence/proof of benefits. All forms, correspondence and communication is dealt with in the strictest confidence.

If requested, evidence must be in letter form and:

- Must have been issued within the last six months
- Must show the family address recorded on Arbor

2.4 When should families apply?

The FSF Committee will consider applications once a fortnight during term time. Families should submit applications as soon as they become aware that they need support. Families must notify the school of any change in circumstances that might affect the continuation of any application, otherwise costs may be recouped, either in whole or in part.

In the event of an emergency, please email FSF@wren.excalibur.org.uk, as funding may be awarded in extreme cases.

2.5 How are decisions made?

The FSF Committee’s decision will be based on your application information and a wider educational perspective including, but not limited to, attendance, behaviour and attitude to learning.

For Educational trip support, a contract will need to be signed by both student and family. The contract will include school expectations for both before, during and after the trip and a payment plan for the agreed amount of Parental funding. Should the contract agreement not be fulfilled we reserve the right to remove the trip place and offer of financial support and recoup any funds already spent. A maximum of 50% of the total funding will be considered for any trip. Applications for trips are limited.

A student may be able to apply for financial support at any time during the academic year. It is possible to apply more than once, but usually only where circumstances have changed – approval of one application does not necessarily mean that further applications will be

approved. Students and their families cannot appeal a decision not to approve an application as the FSF Panel's decision is final.

2.6 Other ways to find support

Contact your [local Citizens Advice branch](#) or [Family Hub](#)

2.7 Citizens Advice

You don't have to be a UK citizen to get support from your local Citizens Advice branch, you just need to be a resident of the local area. Citizens Advice can help you with:

- Getting benefits or organising other financial support
- Accessing support for essential costs (food, bills, rent)

Visit the [Citizens Advice website](#) or contact your [local branch](#) to book an appointment.

2.8 Family Hub

Contact your local Family Hub to get help accessing all the support you might need as a family. [Find your local hub.](#)

2.9 Check you're paying the right amount of tax

Make sure you're on the right tax code. If you aren't, you might be due a refund. Use the [Money Saving Expert's free tax code calculator](#) to find out.

2.10 Claim any benefits you're entitled to

Use one of the benefits calculators below to determine whether there are any benefits you could be claiming. (Repeat this process when your situation changes, or to make sure you don't miss any new or expanded schemes you might be eligible for.)

- [Turn2us](#)
- [Policy in Practice](#)
- [Support for migrant families](#) – use this calculator if you are a migrant family, or if you have no recourse to public funds (meaning you're not entitled to the majority of welfare benefits)

You may be able to get benefits paid early if you need cash urgently – this is known as 'a short-term benefit advance'. You will need to contact the [Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\) office at Reading Borough Council](#).

2.11 Check you've received all the government's cost-of-living payments

The government made [cost-of-living payments](#) between 2023 and 2024 for those receiving certain benefits or tax credits. If you were eligible, the money should have gone straight into your account.

If you think you were due a payment but haven't received one, [report a missing payment](#) to the government.

Be aware of scams! If you receive any emails, texts or phone calls asking you to fill in an application form or asking for your bank details to receive a cost-of-living payment, **do not talk to them or send a reply**. Get more information on [cost-of-living scams](#) on the government's Money Helper website.

2.12 Find out what help you can get with your energy bills

Take a look at these resources from the [British Gas Energy Trust](#) and the [Money Saving Expert](#).

2.13 See what other support you can get from your local authority

Local authorities have many schemes that you might be eligible for, including:

- The [Holiday Activities and Food Programme](#) – access to food and activities over the school holidays. Note that if your child is eligible for free school meals (see above), they'll also qualify for this programme
- [Help with transport to school](#)
- [Help with school uniform costs](#)

2.14 Get free or low-cost food

If you're worried about not having enough food to feed your family, you're not alone. There are several places offering support.

- Toast is available to students on arrival to school between 8.15-8.25am.
- If you have a child under 4, and meet the eligibility criteria, you may be entitled to [healthy start food vouchers](#).
- [Reading food pantries](#) are run by Faith Christian Group. They are open to the community and local families for a small weekly subscription of £5. Members of a pantry can access food including fresh fruit and vegetables and store cupboard favourites that will often value £15-20 or more.
- <https://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/service.page?id=8TGvuD8noac>

2.15 Readifood Food Bank

If you are struggling to pay for food, [Reading's food bank Readifood](#) deliver emergency food parcels directly to homes or via agencies.

A professional organisation or charity must refer you for this service, for example someone at Reading Borough Council, Social Services, a doctor, school, or another professional agency. The Job Centre Plus are unable to make referrals. Contact us at school if you wish to be referred.

2.16 Household Support Fund

Households struggling with soaring energy bills and food prices may be eligible for support through the Household Support Fund. There is an application-based scheme for Reading residents on low incomes and those who are struggling to meet the rising cost of living.

Find out more about what support is available and how to apply on our Household Support Fund web page.

Use food waste apps and websites like Olio (for free food and household items from your local community), Too Good To Go (for low-cost food from local restaurants), or Low Price Foods (food that has passed its best-before date, but is still safe to eat)

2.17 Free hygiene products

Students can obtain a wide range of free sanitary products, discreetly, from Student Reception.

2.18 Replace or repair household items at a low cost or for free

Check if you can get broken household goods replaced or repaired by your local community.

- Get free household goods on [Freecycle](#)
- Get help with DIY repairs at a Repair Cafe

2.19 Find a warm space to beat the chill

Some community spaces open their doors to provide a safe and warm space for a few hours. Many also offer hot drinks and WiFi.

Find a warm space on:

- [Warm Welcome](#)
- [Warm Spaces](#)

3. Further Information

- Contact [StepChange](#) for debt advice
- Contact [Shelter](#) if you're having issues related to housing
- Contact the [Salvation Army](#) for emergency assistance
- See if you're eligible for grants from [Turn2us](#)
- Single parents can get support from [Gingerbread](#)

4. Related documents

- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Pupil Premium Strategy,
- Trips and Visits Policy
- 16-19 Bursary Fund Application Form

More information on the related documents can be found [here](#).