



UCS in Frognal

Private education shouldn't be preserve of the wealthy

Hampstead and Highgate is justly famed for the quality of its many private schools, but how can the less well off benefit from this elite brand of education? Bridget Galton reports on the wealth of bursary schemes offering a helping hand to bright students

Independent schools in Hampstead and Highgate have celebrated another bumper year of exam results. But with annual fees for some private schools topping £18,000 this elite brand of education isn't open to everyone. Many schools are acutely aware of this fact and strive to ensure a handful of less well off students can enjoy the benefits of a top education.

But navigating the various scholarship and bursary schemes

can be complex and confusing.

Scholarships are generally awarded to pupils with exceptional aptitude in academic or other areas such as music, but carry different benefits at different schools. Some come with a small percentage off school fees, while others are honorary and simply guarantee a place at a top establishment.

Bursaries can be worth up to 100 per cent off fees but are rigorously means tested on an annual basis, so be prepared to answer detailed

questions about everything from recent home improvements and holidays, to what kind of car you drive – and be warned that a change of circumstance – such as a job promotion – may result in a bursary reduction.

At UCS in Frognal, Hampstead, where 100 per cent of students achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C and annual fees cost £16,500, headteacher Mark Beard says they don't have academic scholarships but channel a "generous £1mil-

lion bursary fund" into offering around 60 pupils a sliding scale of between 10 and 100 per cent of fees based on their family's net annual income.

"The idea of having a *creme de la creme* (of scholarship students) doesn't sit with our liberal academic ethos – we consider all our students to be scholars.

"We assess children to see would they benefit from the unique education here and contribute something to the life of the

school, make them an offer and only then do we ask the extent to which the family can afford the fees. The money comes from a combination of donors and external hire of facilities which means we are not charging fee paying parents an addition sum of money to generate the bursary."

Mr Beard says the school has always prized the twin principles of freedom of intellect and respect for individuality since the earliest days of its foundation as part of University College, London in 1830 – selecting students with no regard to race or creed.

Fostering in boys a sense of community, alongside a tolerance of and respect for others, the notion that everyone should be able to access a UCS education chimes with the founders' ethos.

"Independent schools are all trying to divert scholarship money into busaries because of issues of social mobility.

"It comes back to the principles of the school – we should be open to all, irrespective of background. Cost of living is high and school



Francis Holland head Vivienne Durham has been nominated for the headteacher of the year awards by Tatler magazine *Picture: David Levine*

fees are high and I am conscious that I don't want UCS to be the exclusive realm of the very rich."

Through the sliding scale of bursaries, he hopes to help not only those who "totally can't afford it" but also middle-earning professionals such as teachers and GPs with some fee assistance.

"We want the widest diversity, across the spectrum of backgrounds," he adds, but warns the size of your capital assets will be scrutinised.

"We don't give bursaries to

people who are cash poor but asset rich."

There are a few music scholarships at UCS via a competitive audition which usually come with a fee reduction of between 10 and 25 per cent, and bursaries are usually awarded at 11+ entry with typically seven percent of the Senior School receiving fee assistance, of whom roughly half are on 100 per cent bursaries.

With just 30 places a year available to outside pupils they are hotly contested.

"There is a threshold of academic standard but we set great store by the interview process where we can get to know their character and individuality and find the right kind of boy – those who demonstrate intellectual curiosity and the confidence to articulate their views."

At Francis Holland school in Regent's Park governors award discretionary bursaries "to girls who demonstrate the ability to succeed at Francis Holland, but whose parents might not have sufficient financial resources."

The level of assistance is also means-tested according to family financial circumstances taking into account income, assets and other relevant circumstances. Daughters of the clergy offered a place earn a fee reduction of a third, and the school also offers scholarships every year at 11+

Two academic scholarships, two music and one art scholarship come with a 25 per cent reduction in fees. These too are means tested but will carry a minimum 15 per cent reduction.



FRANCIS HOLLAND SCHOOL
REGENT'S PARK

OPEN EVENTS 2014

LEADING INDEPENDENT SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AGED 11-18



Senior School
19th September
9th October
5th, 14th November

Senior Open Evening
24th September 5.30-7pm
(no booking required)

Sixth Form Open Evening
7th October 6pm

To reserve a place please contact the Registrar,
Mrs Sandy Bailey

registrar@fhs-nw1.org.uk
020 7723 0176
www.franchisholland.org.uk
Reg. Charity No 312745

A level and GCSE success at FHS

Sixth Formers at Francis Holland School, Regent's Park, NW1 celebrated fantastic A level results. 57% of grades were A*-A and 89% A*-B. One third of students achieved at least three A grades. There were 83.3% A grades too in the Extended Project Qualification, which is worth half an A level.

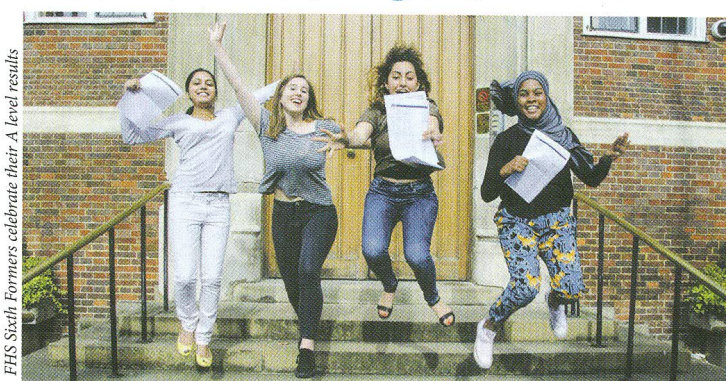
Girls are going to some of the most selective universities in the world. Tessa Sandford Bondy will be reading History at Oxford, Sarah Mohammed will be studying Medicine at Imperial College, London and Srutti Suresan will be taking up her place at Barts, London to read Medicine. Other popular UK destinations include Durham University to study Chemistry, Warwick University to read Law, Nottingham University to take Veterinary Science and Bristol University to study Theatre and English.

A growing number of FHS students are applying to the USA. This year we have students reading Liberal Arts at NYU, Brown University (Rhode Island) and Dartmouth College (New Hampshire).

GCSE and IGCSE results were some of the best ever at Francis Holland School, Regent's Park with 44% A* grades and 79.4% A*-A grades.

Mrs Vivienne Durham, the Headmistress said: "These splendid examination grades are a result of extremely hard work by our students and by their teachers. I am delighted that our girls have been so successful in achieving their chosen university places and we wish them much happiness for the next stage of their lives beyond Francis Holland."

[facebook.com/FrancisHollandSchoolRegentsPark](https://www.facebook.com/FrancisHollandSchoolRegentsPark)
[@FHS_RegentsPark](https://twitter.com/FHS_RegentsPark)



At North Bridge House the school's scholarship programme "celebrates students with a range of skills and talents across the curriculum. Those that excel in and make an outstanding contribution to a particular area."

The Hampstead senior branch offers a range of academic, sporting and creative scholarships to current and prospective pupils in years 7 and 9 to worthy candidates who "not only demonstrate excellence in their specific field but will sport a proactive attitude towards school life as a whole. North Bridge House scholars are expected to represent the school both academically and recreationally, leading their peers in extra-curricular and enrichment activity."

At prestigious Highgate School prospective pupils' academic ability is taken into account and the size of each bursary is means-tested on a sliding scale.

Families are visited at home to fill out a form detailing income sources, outgoings, assets, liabilities, size of family, value and council tax band of the family home.

A family with two children and a total income of £25,000 could gain a full bursary of £18,165 annual school fees, while those on a joint income of £55,000 might gain an annual bursary of around £5,485. Anyone with a joint annual income above £75,000 is unlikely to be awarded a bursary.

The £14,500-a-year South Hampstead High School in



UCS School headteacher Mark Beard *Picture: Dieter Perry*

Maresfield Gardens offers several music scholarships based on playing ability, future potential and commitment to the life of the music department with candidates likely to be at grade VI in their instrument by the time they apply at 11+.

There are also a limited number of bursaries available.

Channing School in Highgate makes financial awards "to ensure that girls of exceptional ability and potential can benefit from a Channing education."

Targeted at prospective pupils likely to make sound academic progress and participate in extra curricular activities at the school, most awards are made on the basis of financial circumstances.

The headmistress also has the discretion to make financial awards of up to 10 per cent of tuition fees at any point during a pupil's career and the school also offers several academic and music awards. "Channing School has always done its best to ensure that

children who would benefit from an education at the School are not excluded for financial reasons," reads the school website.

"We offer means-tested financial support with the payment of school fees to parents who would otherwise be unable to afford them. This...bursary may be awarded in the form of a discount of up to 100 per cent on tuition fees, depending on the financial circumstances of applicants."

As at Highgate awards are made on a sliding scale and if the family income is greater than four times the school fees they are unlikely to qualify.

Bursaries are renewed and reviewed annually and each is considered on its own merits with equity in your home, ownership of other properties, expenditure on expensive holidays, luxury cars and home improvements, savings or investments all be scrutinised.

Although family circumstances such as the need to care for pre-school children, or other dependents will be taken into account the school expects "where there are two partners both will be employed and a family's ability to improve its financial position or earning power will be considered."

"It is recognised that the sacrifices that a family can or will make in order to pay school fees come down to personal choice. However, Channing School aims to ensure that any financial support offered is directed towards those that need it most."

Means tested bursaries for some pupils

Adam Pettitt, Head Master at Highgate School, says they offer bursaries, which is "an old-fashioned term for financial assistance or, perhaps, better still, an 'assisted place'".

He explains: "The amount which is made available by family is tested against the family's income, a process most schools call 'means testing'. A child applies for a place – aged 11 or 16, in Year 7 or Year 12 – and takes the admissions tests. At the same time the parent or carer is invited to tick a box on the admissions form to say whether the family would need help with paying the fees. Our Outreach and Access Officer, Sam Keeble, sends out a 'financial assessment form' in which parents or carers are asked to provide information regarding all sources of income, all outgoings, all assets (including property), all liabilities, and any other relevant information: each family is offered a home visit by Sam who helps with completing the form and gives advice about Highgate and the admission process; about 100 families are visited each year. While the form is quite detailed (running to 14 pages), the information required is readily available to most families. The information is treated in strictest confidence.

"We aim to offer the equivalent of 10 full-fee bursaries, but these may range from 10 per cent to 100pc of the school fee (together with a uniform grant), and thus more than ten children per year will receive some level of financial help: the majority of children receiving help have bursaries worth over 70pc of the school fee. Information about a family's financial circumstances needs updating annually. If the need rises, the level of support may be increased. Highgate is committed to raising funds in the long-term to increase the level of help with fees. For entry in 2015, for example, we are introducing our first 'key worker' bursary which aims to give financial help to local families engaged in delivering front-line services (e.g. health, care, police, education).

Scholarships with fee discount have been phased out over the last six years and replaced with academic awards – prizes in English and mathematics, academic exhibitions and scholarships – which are now 'nominal'."



Georgina Masfield, the headteacher at North Bridge House senior school

Picture: Nigel Sutton