



Filmmaking studio at Hurtwood House

# TRY A NEW DIRECTION AT A-LEVEL

Sixth-form can be the ideal time to apply for a bursary to attend a prestigious school, says *EMMA REED*

Almost a third of privately educated pupils receive some financial assistance in the form of a scholarship or a bursary. Their availability is something often discussed at the transition stage to senior school, but arguably less so for those entering a school at sixth form. Yet they do exist and it's often worth asking even if it's not immediately apparent, especially given the critical role these two years play in a pupil's life and the choices open to them.

At Dulwich College, for example, there are 214 pupils in receipt of a bursary with 75 percent of them benefitting from a full bursary which covers 100 percent of the fees along with some extras. There are 74 pupils who hold a bursary in the Upper School (Years 12 and 13). Of those, 59 are day pupils and 15 are boarders. Dulwich advises that there are a small number of day places available for entrance at 16 plus, and that families should indicate if they would like to be assessed for a bursary should their son be offered a place when they make their application. They also offer full boarding bursaries mainly through their long-term collaboration with SpringBoard (the Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation). SpringBoard works with state boarding and independent schools to assist them in ensuring their fully funded places are focused on those in the community that need them the most.

'We believe there are important differences that bursaries can make to lives,' says a spokesperson for Dulwich. 'We look to equip pupils for higher education and the world of work; we look to create a diverse community of children and staff of all backgrounds to the benefit of all and we look to the positive ripple effect on local communities.'

Arese Joe-Oshodi is in his final year of an engineering degree at Oxford University having entered Dulwich's sixth form as a bursary recipient. 'If I had to use a word to describe my experience at Dulwich, it would





Dulwich College, London

be abundance,' Joe-Oshodi says. 'From travelling to Shanghai for a leadership conference, where I gained invaluable leadership skills and made lifelong friends from around the world, to studying chiaroscuro Renaissance art in liberal studies and delving into quantum physics in A-level plus, it never felt like academic performance was the be-all and end-all. Alongside my position at Oxford, none of this would be possible without my experience at Dulwich.'

The international connections mentioned by Joe-Oshodi are something that those attending DLD College London benefit from hugely. A co-educational day and boarding school in central London, it has an enviable site on the South Bank with boarding in the same building. Around 50 percent of their sixth-form intake is external. Access to an international network is something Vice Principal Dr. Sarah Watson sees as highly valuable in the modern world and of particular benefit to those who otherwise might not have access to this. 'Our school has students from 58 countries,' Watson says. 'I think for domestic students, especially on bursaries, they've often not come from an international background and they would never have that opportunity to come out of school with an international network.'

Watson's passion for the benefit of bursaries is borne out of her having been the recipient of one herself. 'I was brought up in quite a lot of poverty in Liverpool,' she says. 'My parents pushed me to get a full bursary at school because they knew education was the way out.' This enabled her to live and work in Hong Kong, Switzerland and Australia establishing those

international connections that are so important in today's global society. 'A bursary changed the course of my life,' she adds.

DLD offers up to 100 percent means-tested bursaries to students with a British passport. These are funded by The Gold Standard Charitable Trust. Bursaries are also available for international students and are funded by the Alpha Plus Group. These bursaries cover tuition fees but not boarding costs.

At Hurtwood House, those who are creatively talented but who would not otherwise be able to afford to attend, are also given opportunities in the form of a scholarship as opposed to a bursary. There is an A-level Performing Arts Scholarship available which is reviewed at the end of the first year. Elliott Skilton at Hurtwood outlines that there is one 100 percent scholarship, one 50 percent, two with a 25 percent fee deduction and three with a 10 percent deduction. 'The major scholarships are awarded to students auditioning in all three of the disciplines – acting, singing and dance,' he says. 'We are looking for evidence of outstanding talent and natural skills. We are hoping to find young people who would make a positive contribution to the Hurtwood Theatre during their time here.'

Boarding at Hurtwood enables students to fully participate in the life of the school. Skilton adds that it's 'an exceptional stepping stone to independence and post-school life such as University.' Performing Arts Scholar Jake Pratt says, 'I had never boarded before, but the transition couldn't have been made easier. From the minute I arrived I felt that Hurtwood was home from home. I made so many new friends and I was constantly on stage singing and dancing in musicals, pop concerts and dance showcases.' Callum

Henderson, currently featuring in Grease in the West End was also a Performing Arts Scholar and credits Hurtwood with helping him to achieve his ambition of getting into Guildford School of Acting. While there is a heavy emphasis on the performing arts at Hurtwood, a smaller number of scholarships are also available in Maths and Science.

At Francis Holland Schools Trust (FHST), which comprises two leading London independent girls' schools: Francis Holland School, Sloane Square, and Francis Holland School, Regent's Park, there is a huge commitment to nurturing potential in pupils at both schools, encouraging high aspirations across the board and helping girls to develop the confidence and ability to achieve their goals. They have an ambitious Trust-wide bursary campaign.

At FHS Sloane Square, every year there are three or four students on a 100 percent sixth form bursary or part bursary. They are provided with a school laptop and it has been possible for some students to go on trips which are also paid for. 'Our bursary students are often very driven and recognise the opportunity they've been given, particularly in preparation for university.' This involves such things as workshops with Imperial College junior doctors for medical applicants, TEDx talks and help from alumnae in securing work experience.

'Ultimately, we want to ensure that as many girls as possible who are offered places at either of our senior schools are able to take up their places irrespective of financial circumstances,' says

a spokesperson for the school. As a result, 2022 saw the launch of their Promise Campaign ([yourpromise.org.uk](http://yourpromise.org.uk)) with the aim of building a £15 million endowment fund to double the school's bursary provision by 2032 so that approximately 50 girls can benefit from a bursary each year.

Anne\*, a recipient of a bursary now in their third year studying Medicine at Imperial College London reflects on how she has benefitted. 'It changed my career pathway,' Anne says. 'I definitely would not have chosen medicine without it. The teachers at FHS made me look at life very differently and that has really helped me in medicine and I will take that on for the rest of my life. I want to say a huge thank you to the donors. It was an opportunity that I would not have had without their generosity, and it really has made a huge difference to my life.'

The school also sees the benefits of bursary provision in the sixth form. 'We are delighted to have seen the positive impact of the bursary students who enter our sixth form in terms of their skills, leadership and outlook, as well as the benefits for themselves.'

FHS Regent's Park offers two or three 100 percent bursaries each year to external candidates for academic merit in their GCSEs.

They opened a new sixth form centre, Linhope House, in September 2022, increasing sixth form space by 300 percent and allowing them to increase their sixth form intake which will help them fulfil their Trust-wide aim of doubling the number of bursaries on offer.

Jane\*, one of Regent's Park bursary recipients has this to say: 'Being awarded a scholarship has enabled me to become independent and aid in motivating me to try and achieve the best possible outcome for myself. It has also

*Being awarded a scholarship has enabled me to become independent and aid in motivating me to achieve the best outcome for me. I love the teachers at Francis Holland'*

allowed me to further get involved in the subjects I love the most. I love the sixth form teachers at FHS, who clearly demonstrate a passion for their subjects, but also have huge compassion, understanding and generosity when considering my financial and social background. I always feel comfortable talking to them about any issues I may have, and they are always understanding and willing to help, as well as very motivating and inspiring. I know they always have my best interests at heart.

'My time at FHS has certainly helped solidify what I would like to do in the future and has helped me see that I can achieve whatever I want to.'

Bursaries at sixth form help students at a critical time in their educational career, helping them achieve their potential and providing them with opportunities for their future that may otherwise have not been available to them. It's not only the students who benefit, schools do too. As Dr Watson notes, there are often pots of money that you don't know exist, so it's always worth asking. ■

\*Some names have been changed



DLD College students

PHOTOS: DULWICH COLLEGE, DLD COLLEGE LONDON