Parent Guide: Fee Assistance at Michael Oak Waldorf School

Overview

Michael Oak Waldorf School offers various types of financial support to help families with school fees. This guide explains who can qualify, how to apply, the decision process, and key deadlines.

Who Decides on Fee Assistance?

- The **Finance and Audit Committee (FinCom)**, a group of school members including trustees, parents and staff, makes all fee assistance decisions.
- **Confidentiality** is critical: personal information about applicants is kept private, and members with conflicts (like family applications) must recuse themselves. Teachers are specifically not included in the Committee to avoid the possibility of any unconscious bias based on information about a family's ability to pay fees.
- The **Bursar** manages applications, applies an objective formula to evaluate need, and prepares proposals for approval by FinCom.
- The **School Administrator** ensures that the application process is made known to the school community, reviews the proposals made by the Bursar, and ensures that the decisions of Fincom are correctly communicated to applicants.

How to Apply

1. **Fill out the application form** for fee assistance (available from the Bursar).
2. **Submit supporting documents** such as proof of income. These are detailed on the Application Form.
3. **Apply before the deadline** — late applications are generally not considered unless for emergency help.

Important Deadlines

- **Apply before the specified closing date** published annually. This is usually the end of August.
- **Applications for short-term emergency relief** (of less than 6 months), can be submitted at any time.

Michael Oak
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Criteria for Fee Assistance

- The fee assistance provided is **not a full bursary**; it usually covers **up to 30% of tuition fees**.
- Eligibility depends on **financial need** and your income level:
  - Families whose fees are **more than 10% of their annual gross income** may qualify. This is a guideline only as criteria to qualify each year depends on the budget available and the number of applicants.
  - **Short-term financial challenges** are the main focus (for a year at a time) —long-term support (over multiple years) is not guaranteed.
- Families with **arrears over one month** or **fees less than 10% of income** typically do not qualify.
- Families who have been at the school for less than a year will not be considered. Priority is given to **students in upper primary or later high school years**.

Types of Assistance Available

- **General fee assistance:** Up to 30% of tuition fees, awarded based on financial need. This is supported by funds set aside in each budget year from tuition fees paid by all parents.
- **Emergency assistance:** Temporary help for up to 6 months during short-term crises.
- **Special funds:** Support from specific trusts or donations, often for additional criteria like language support or diversity.
  - **Freunde Sponsorships**: Monthly donations from donors in Europe (usually €50–€100) support individual children, especially those of colour.
  - **Herman Olthaver Trust**: Supports children needing extra language support.
  - **Nikiwe Fund**: In support of racial diversity at the school, whether by second language support or in other ways. Usually added to general fee assistance; maximum amount equal to general fee assistance provided.

Other Important Notes

- **Fee assistance is reviewed annually** and may be adjusted if your financial situation changes.
- The school focuses on short-term support; **long-term support over multiple years** is not guaranteed.

If you need help or have questions, contact the Bursar before applying: bursar@michaeloak.org.za

We wish you the best in accessing the support you need!