



Financial Hardship Policy

Endorsed by School Council: 14th October 2017

Purpose

To detail the School's commitment to recognising and supporting families experiencing hardship so that every child at New Gisborne Primary School (NGPS) has access to educational opportunities and is not disadvantaged or excluded.

Rationale

The Victorian community shares a vision to build an education system that champions excellence and ensures that every child has access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstances. Financial hardship refers to the inability of a family to pay for general items or activities due to financial difficulties or circumstances. This can be temporary financial difficulty due to a sudden unexpected change of circumstances; as a result of low and / or fixed income which leads to ongoing financial difficulty; or a combination of low income and unexpected change in circumstances. The NGPS Financial Hardship Policy reflects a proactive strategy to discreetly support families experiencing unexpected loss, illness, job loss, relationship changes and those experiencing longer term hardship.

Aims

NGPS Financial Hardship policy aims to support families during times of hardship through early identification and communication between NGPS and families.

Implementation

Early identification and implementation of strategies is critical in enabling NGPS to best support families in managing financial hardship with regards to school payments. NGPS will employ proactive strategies including:

Through classroom teachers:

- Ensure students are attending school and monitor any unusual absences.
- Monitor and check that students have brought lunch / snacks to school.
- Observe any sudden changes to student's health and wellbeing.
- Ensure families from non-English speaking backgrounds understand notices and information, or notify the office to access free translation services if required.
- Communicate any concerns with families and offer support in a respectful manner.
- Confidentially bring any concerns to the Principal or Assistant Principal.
- Observe if notices for payment and permission forms e.g. camps, excursions, activities are not returned and confidentially bring it to the attention of the Business Manager.
- Encourage the family to speak to the Business Manager, Principal or Assistant Principal if there appears to be a preference to keep a student home from school, which may indicate hardship.

Through the Office:

- Ensure information on payment options is available, accessible and easily understood to all families so that they know what to expect and what support they can access.
- Ensure that those from non-English speaking backgrounds understand the information or organise a free translation service.
- Ensure families are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for Family Contributions (i.e. a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year) to enable families to save and budget accordingly.

- Ensure families are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year including camps, excursions and incursions and ensure that families have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought.
- Be sensitive to any change communicated by the family, which may indicate hardship.
- Ensure the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel as required.
- Ensure families experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next.
- Issue only one reminder notice to families for voluntary financial contributions per year.
- Statements for unpaid essential items, or optional items accepted by families, are not generated more than monthly or according to the family payment arrangements with the school.

Through the Principal / Assistant Principal:

- Ensure that staff are aware of the NGPS Financial Hardship Policy.
- Ensure families experiencing hardship are aware of the support available so as to avoid stress, disengagement and avoidance.
- Ensure families feel that they can approach the school to discuss their financial hardship concerns and be supported in a respectful and confidential manner.
- Ensure that the student's access to educational opportunities is not impacted.

Support for Families

Consideration for financial hardship arrangements in respect to payment requests is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short-term crisis in a confidential manner, on a case by case basis. Families are encouraged to contact the Business Manager, Principal or Assistant Principal in the school office on 5428 2232 for a confidential discussion.

NGPS financial hardship arrangements include a proactive approach to providing support to families experiencing financial difficulty and can include:

- CSEF – Camps, Sports and Excursion Funds
- State Schools Relief
- Payment Plans
- Reduced or subsidised fees
- Waiving of fees
- Attendance at excursions / camps / sports from Student Welfare Funds for those not eligible for CSEF
- Provision of second hand uniforms
- Use of 1:1 iPad.

Communication

NGPS Financial Hardship Policy will be published on the school website at www.newgisps.vic.edu.au or a copy may be requested from the school office.

General enquiries regarding any payment requests can be made to the office in person or by phoning 5428 2232.

Review of Policy Implementation:

NGPS School Council approves, monitors and reviews annually the Financial Hardship Policy to ensure:

- Access, equity and inclusion
- Affordability
- Engagement and support
- Respect and confidentiality
- Transparency and accountability.

Approval Body:

School Council