POLICY: FINANCIAL HELP FOR FAMILIES

PURPOSE:

This policy sets out requirements for schools to prepare for and support families experiencing financial hardship in order to facilitate student participation in the full school program.

AIM:

- Schools must develop arrangements that support families experiencing financial hardship.
- Arrangements should consider but not be limited to:
    - tailored payment plans, waiving, reducing or extending payment deadlines
    - referrals to Victorian Government or community support programs
- Schools must communicate arrangements so that all families are well informed.
- Schools should put in place strategies to identify families experiencing hardship, while promoting their dignity, exercising sensitivity and confidentiality of their circumstances.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Schools must prepare for and support families who are experiencing financial hardship and who are unable to make parent payments under the Parent Payments Policy.

This includes developing financial help for families arrangements that:

- outline reasonable ways to support families who are unable to make financial payments as set out in the parent payment policy
- support families on a case by case basis and provide an appropriate, achievable and family-centred response that promotes the dignity and confidentiality of family circumstances and assures families that students will continue to be supported to access the curriculum
- nominate a suitable parent payment contact person who will be responsible for working with families to determine, negotiate and maintain appropriate responses

FINANCIAL HELP ARRANGEMENTS:

If a family is experiencing financial hardship and is unable to make a parent payment, schools should consider school-based payment arrangements such as:

- establishing flexible payment plans or waiving, reducing or extending payment deadlines for essential or optional charges
- maintaining contact with families and revisiting agreed arrangements when requested
- making available class sets or establishing strategies for the sale or exchange of second hand essential and optional items such as textbooks, uniforms and stationery
- referring families to government or community support programs

Schools should be aware of Department and externally provided support programs and refer families to these services where appropriate or apply to programs on their behalf.

Government-funded support programs include:

- State Schools' Relief affordable uniform program
- Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund
- a range of student scholarships

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES:

Schools must develop and implement a communication strategy so that all families are informed of the school's financial help for families arrangements by providing multiple, clear and accessible communications throughout the school year. Messaging to families must be:

- readily available such as on the school website and newsletter.
- inclusive and use language that is appropriate, non-judgmental and culturally responsive for families from non-English speaking backgrounds
- translated if required. Schools can access the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service as a free translation service for key school communications

RECOGNISING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP:

Schools must be proactive in sensitively identifying families who may be reluctant to access arrangements and refer them to the nominated parent payment contact to determine if support is needed.

Schools can implement a process to provide training or information to teaching and administration staff to identify signs of financial hardship.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL:

Policy last reviewed	24/3/2026
Consultation	Consultation with school council and approved by School Council
Approved by	James Bell, principal
Next scheduled review date	March 2027