

ARMADALE PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY

SCHOOL No. 2634

Financial Hardship Policy	
Authorisation: By the Armadale Primary School (APS) Council on the 12 th December 2016 Recommended: By the Finance Sub Committee	Review Date: It is recommended that this policy is reviewed by the Finance Sub Committee before November 2017.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To establish a formal Financial Hardship Policy (Hardship Policy) for Armadale Primary School (APS).

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 Outline the criteria and circumstances under which families qualify for financial relief under APS's Hardship Policy and the process to be followed by parents to apply and be granted financial relief. Under the policy "Hardship" is viewed as an inability to pay outstanding school fees and or levies due to financial difficulty or circumstance.

2.2 Outline the type of financial relief to be offered under the Hardship Policy and who will determine eligibility.

2.3 Ensure the school community is aware of APS's Hardship Policy.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 The School will:

- 3.1.1 Provide a 'hardship allocation' within its annual operating budget to support the application of its Hardship Policy. More particularly, the hardship allocation will represent a budgeted amount the school council is prepared to use to financially assist families in financial need. Hardship relief will be considered for families experiencing chronic long-term financial hardship or short term crises on a case-by-case basis. Financial relief under the policy will not entail cash payments to parents but will involve relief from payment of certain levies and fees.
- 3.1.2 Notify parents of the existence of the Hardship Policy on the school website as well as notification in the APS Newsletter at least once annually.
- 3.1.3 Include in its annual operating budget an allocation to meet the cost of hardship cases. The amount budgeted will represent up to 5% of the Essential Education Items and Optional Items allocations.
- 3.1.4 Annually increase the budgeted amount (in dollar terms) by the Education Sector's CPI as is currently APS's policy with respect to the annual increase in APS's Essential Education Items levy.
- 3.1.5 Use the hardship allocation to assist parents facing permanent or temporary financial hardship in the financing of items such as, but not exclusively:
 - Essential Education Item(s);
 - Netbook lease(s);
 - School Camps, including non-compulsory camps such as the Somers Camp;
 - Incursions and excursions; and
 - Ad hoc applications. For example, meeting schooling costs faced by children of refugees.
- 3.1.6 Ensure families facing hardship are afforded the option of paying school accounts via instalments or an agreed payment plan. Further, ensure families are made aware of potential assistance through government assistance programs such as the Camps, Sport and Excursion Fund.
- 3.1.7 Offer to reduce the quantum or alter the timelines of requested parent payments. These can include but not be limited to:
 - Waiving fees;
 - Reducing fees;
 - Deferring payment or extending payment deadlines;
 - Providing flexible payment plans – beyond that available under APS's standard policy; and
 - Loan-to-own strategies, such as for devices and other hardware.

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3.2 The Principal will:

- 3.2.1 Have the responsibility for determining and administering the hardship allocation. Moreover, it will be the responsibility of the Principal to receive requests for financial relief and or identify circumstances in which he/she believes a legitimate case or cases of financial hardship exist. In circumstances where the latter applies, the Principal can grant relief in the absence of a parent-initiated application.
- 3.2.2 Ensure APS staff is aware of APS's Hardship Policy and encourage them to be proactive in recognising parents in need of hardship support. While the identification of hardship cases may be undertaken in conjunction with teachers, it is the sole responsibility of the Principal to discuss any financial relief with the family concerned.
- 3.2.3 Ensure the school community and potential recipients of financial relief are made aware of the Hardship Policy and its applicability.
- 3.2.4 Have the ability to determine whether assistance is provided and the level of assistance provided. More particularly, the principal may elect for the school to absorb all or some of the fees or costs of camps, incursions and excursions, netbook leases, etc., with ~~review of~~ the level of financial relief afforded to a family reviewed at least annually or more frequently at the discretion of the Principal. In determining eligibility the Principal will take into consideration, amongst other factors, whether the parent(s):
- 3.2.4.1 is a holder of a Government Health Care Card;
 - 3.2.4.2 has contacted Centrelink to discuss financial assistance;
 - 3.2.4.3 contacted the City of Stonington's Emergency Relief Department;
 - 3.2.4.4 applied for the Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund; and
 - 3.2.4.5 is a refugee.
- 3.2.5 Consult with the APS Council President on individual circumstances in which the hardship budget is to be applied, including details of the circumstances under which financial relief is being sought and level of relief to be applied. In circumstances where the Principal and APS Council President disagree on what relief is to be provided, the APS Council Treasurer will be called upon to make the decision.
- ~~3.2.53.2.6~~ At each APS Council meeting provide an update at each APS Council meeting on the extent to which the hardship allocation has been applied, and advise the APS Council President of individual circumstances in which the hardship budget has been applied, including details of the circumstances under which relief is being sought or applied. The updates to the APS Council are to be in summary form and not include the names of families receiving hardship relief. More particularly, to protect the privacy of families their identity will only be made available to the APS Principal, Business Manager, and APS Council President and possibly Council Treasurer.
- ~~3.2.63.2.7~~ Have the ability to decline or suspend financial relief to a family if in their view a request from the family is unsubstantiated or no longer applies.
- ~~3.2.73.2.8~~ Seek APS Council approval for use of additional funds beyond that budgeted for in a particular year.
- ~~3.2.83.2.9~~ Have the ability to also provide additional non-financial school resources, such as spare school uniforms, pens, paper, rulers, etc. when he or she deems it appropriate to support the physical and emotional wellbeing of the child(ren).
- ~~3.2.93.2.10~~ Not be permitted to grant direct cash payments to families or to use the hardship allocation to meet OOSHC and or Holiday Program obligations.

3.3 Parents will:

- 3.3.1 Have the opportunity to apply for hardship relief based on financial considerations. Note, hardship relief provided to beneficiaries will in most cases only be undertaken after government financial assistance has been investigated / applied for. It is envisaged that in most cases the financial relief provided by APS will supplement assistance already provided under various Centrelink programs.

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- 3.3.2 Apply directly to the APS Principal using the APS Financial Hardship Application Form which can be obtained from the school office.
- 3.3.3 Need to be prepared to demonstrate the basis under which the hardship relief should be granted to them. Circumstances under which it is envisaged that hardship relief may be appropriate include:
- unemployment of the main breadwinner;
 - illness of the family's main breadwinner preventing them from working;
 - death / incapacitation of parent(s);
 - out of home care arrangements or temporary foster parents;
 - family breakdown or severe family disruption (e.g. divorce, separation, substance dependence);
 - family violence;
 - natural disaster;
 - refugee status; or
 - a family simply 'doing it tough'.
- 3.3.4 Not be required to meet the full or part cost of the Essential Education Items, note book leases, camps, and or incursion or excursions if they are successful in their application or if the Principal considers it appropriate that financial relief be provided in the absence of a parent-initiated application.

4. EVALUATION

- 4.1 This Policy will be evaluated annually by the APS Scholl Council's Finance Sub-Committee.