



Kalinda Primary School No. 5121

Hardship Policy

Purpose

To ensure that families experiencing hardship are aware of options and support available so that every child 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 and young person has access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstances. Hardship refers to the inability to pay 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 KPS Hardship Policy reflects a proactive strategy to discreetly support families experiencing unexpected loss, illness, job loss, relationship changes and those experiencing longer term hardship.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION THROUGH COMMUNICATION

KPS understands that at times families may experience financial difficulty or hardship and may find requests for payment challenging.

Families are encouraged to contact the Business Manager in the school office, on 9876 3289 or email kalinda.ps@education.vic.gov.au for a confidential discussion and plan of support. Families may request to discuss their circumstances with the Principal or Assistant Principal if they prefer.

STRATEGY TO SUPPORT PARENTS

Early identification is critical in supporting families to manage financial hardship. KPS may employ such proactive strategies and confidential discussions as:

Through classroom teachers:

- Monitor if students are regularly attending school and if there any unusual absences
- Monitor if students have brought lunch/snacks to school
- Observe any sudden changes to student health and wellbeing
- Assist parents from non-English speaking backgrounds with their understanding of important notices and information
- Communicate with parents/guardians any concerns and offer support in a respectful manner
- Report any concerns to the Principal/Assistant Principal
- Observe if notices for payment and permission forms e.g. for excursions, camps, activities are not returned and bring it to the attention of the Business Manager
- Encourage parents/guardians to speak with the Business Manager or Principal if there appears to be a preference to keep the student home, for reasons that may relate to hardship.

Through the office team:

- Ensure information on payment options is available, easily accessible and clearly explained to all parents so that they know what to expect and what support they can access
- Support parents/guardians from non-English speaking backgrounds with their understanding of important information (arranging access to a free translation service is available)
- Ensure parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for Booklists (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year). This enables parents to save and budget accordingly
- Ensure parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year including camps, excursions and incursions - ensuring parents have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought
- Be sensitive to any change in personal circumstances, communicated by the parent, which may indicate hardship
- Ensure the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel
- Limit reminders to parents/guardians about outstanding school fees, and be sensitive to circumstances indicating hardship
- Use of debt collectors to obtain unpaid school fees by parents/guardians is not permitted
- Issue only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential items, or optional items accepted by parents, are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the school.

Through the Principal, Assistant Principal and Wellbeing team:

- Ensure staff are aware of the KPS Hardship Policy
- Support parents experiencing hardship to become aware of the support available to them
- Encourage families to feel they can approach the school to discuss their concerns and be supported in a respectful and confidential manner
- Facilitate student access to educational opportunities, so as to avoid non-participation through financial hardship.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND KEY CONTACTS

Consideration to hardship arrangements in respect to payment requests is provided to families experiencing long-term hardship or short-term crisis on a confidential, case-by-case basis.

Families are encouraged to contact the Business Manager in the school office, on 9876 3289 or kalinda.ps@education.vic.gov.au for a confidential discussion and plan of support, or the Principal or Assistant Principal, if they prefer.

KPS hardship arrangements include a proactive approach to providing support for parents/guardians experiencing financial difficulty and include:

- Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund
- State Schools' Relief

General enquiries regarding any payment requests can be made to the office in person, by phone on 9876 3289 or email kalinda.ps@education.vic.gov.au. Our friendly staff in the office are able to assist with general enquiries.

For further information on financial help for families, please visit:
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy>

Access the Hardship Policy

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

REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

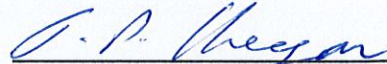
KPS School Council approves, monitors and reviews annually the Hardship Policy to ensure:

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

In the review process School Council will identify any factors to be taken into account, including any concerns raised by the school community and will notify any changes to the Hardship Policy annually via the school website www.kalinda.vic.edu.au and newsletter.

This policy was last updated on 22.02.2021 and is scheduled for review in February 2022.

Signed Tom Keegan (School Council President):



Signed Shaun McClare (Principal):