



# Thomas Mitchell Primary School

## HARDSHIP POLICY

**Ratified:** 18/5/21  
**Review every:** 1 year  
**Review due:** 2022  
**School Council** Y

### **RATIONALE:**

The Education & Training Reform Act empowers School Councils to charge parents for goods and services used in the course of instruction of their children, for school related use or student experiences.

Schools have a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents who may be experiencing either short term or long term hardship and are unable to make requested payments. This includes offering options which support and assist those parents.

Thomas Mitchell Primary School recognises that hardship may be deemed as experiencing financial difficulties, family tragedy, mental health challenges or impacts of disaster.

### **AIMS:**

- To provide families experiencing long or short term hardship or crisis an opportunity for the school to consider arrangements and concessions to families on a confidential, case by case basis.
- To provide appropriate strategies for children of families experiencing hardship to participate in the full breadth of educational experiences offered by the school.
- To ensure that all children to be treated equally and respectfully and without discrimination.
- To ensure that hardship not be a barrier to participation in school activities.
- To promote early identification of hardship through communication.

### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

#### **Early Identification Support strategies:**

##### **Through teachers:**

- Monitoring absence patterns
- Ensuring lunch/snacks are brought to school
- Observation of changes to student's health and wellbeing
- Ensuring parents from EAL backgrounds understand notices and information, or provided with access to free translation services
- Encouraging a parent or carer to speak confidentially to the contacts listed below
- Observation of return of notices for payments and permissions, eg camps, excursions, activities

##### **Through the office team:**

- Ensuring payment options are included in school notices
- Supporting parents of EAL backgrounds to understand information or referral for translation services



- Provide parents with at least 6 weeks early notice of annual payment requests
- Provide at least two weeks notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year
- Provide at least 12 weeks notice of any other larger payment requests, ie camps
- Maintain the individual's right to confidentiality and prompt referral
- Being sensitive to any change communication by a parent and referring potential hardship to the Business Manager
- Ensure parents are not pursued for outstanding charges without authority
- Ensuring the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and shared only with relevant tasked school personnel
- Invoices and statements are provided on request via the Business Manager

**Through the Principal Class and Business Manager:**

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

**Application:**

- Parents or carers experiencing hardship are encouraged to contact the Principal, Welfare Coordinator (Assistant Principal) or School Business Manager to discuss support options that may be available.
- Parents can communicate by phone, email or in person about their confidential financial situation.
- An assessment of short term hardship generally means parent funded contributions are given extensions of time for payment and any review of optional items selected.
- Long term hardship applications will be considered individually and will require School Council approval (names of individuals are only disclosed to staff or councillors in order to fulfil their roles).

Confidential arrangements can be made by calling, visiting, emailing the following people.

Contacts:

Principal	John Hurley
Assistant Principal	Giselle Cassar
Business Manager	Tracey Etherington

**Communication:**

Local Parent Payment and Hardship Policies are available from school and on our website.

Links to the hardship policy will be provided in requests to parents for payment.

Email: [thomas.mitchell.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:thomas.mitchell.ps@education.vic.gov.au)  
Website: [www.tmps.vic.edu.au](http://www.tmps.vic.edu.au)  
Phone: 03 9706 2254



**Support available:**

Support may be provided in one or more of the following ways:

- CSEF
- Payment Plans
- State Schools Relief
- Reduced fees
- Waiving of fees
- Provision of food
- Attendance at excursions/camps/sports from funds for those not eligible for CSEF
- Provision of second hand uniform (where available)
- Use of school owned equipment
- Third party agency funding where available.

**EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed in line with the Parent Payment policy, annually.