

## Financial Hardship Policy

<p><b>Purpose</b></p>	<p>The River School is committed to giving consideration and assistance to families who are experiencing financial hardship. This policy outlines what financial hardship is and how the School may assist.</p> <p>The policy describes the administrative processes for applications from families for full or partial waiving of tuition and other fees in cases of financial hardship.</p> <p>To be eligible for financial hardship support, a student must be currently enrolled at The River School.</p> <p>Fee waivers cannot be used as a means of covering a term's notice for cancellation of enrolment where a student/s has been withdrawn from attendance without providing the full 10 week notice period.</p>	
<p><b>Scope</b></p>	<p>This policy applies to current staff and families of The River School.</p>	
<p><b>Responsibility</b></p>	<p>School Principal</p>	
<p><b>Related Policies &amp; Documents</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy Contribution Scheme</li> <li>• Application for Fee Waiver</li> <li>• Payment Plan</li> <li>• The River School Discount Policy</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Status</b></p>	<p>Approved</p>	<p><b>Supersedes</b> FHP2022</p>
<p><b>Last Review Date</b></p>	<p>November 2023</p>	<p><b>Next Review Date</b> November 2024</p>
<p><b>Review Cycle</b></p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p><b>Version ID</b> FHP2023</p>
<p><b>Authorisation</b></p>	<p>Board Chair</p>	<p><b>Date of Authorisation</b> 18/11/2023</p>
<p><b>Policy Owner:</b></p>	<p>AME Ltd Board</p>	

## 1. Definitions

Financial Hardship involves a crisis of inability, rather than an ongoing unwillingness, to pay fees. Financial hardship usually results from unforeseen factors and involves a temporary increase in financial commitments or a decrease in financial capacity.

Families must notify the School immediately if they wish to be considered for financial hardship support. This policy cannot be applied retrospectively as a means of avoiding fees that have already accumulated. It can only be used to establish future fees and costs.

Examples of hardship could include sudden uninsured loss, such as loss of a family business or income, loss of a family home and possessions by fire or flood, unexpected costs or loss of income resulting from an accident, life-threatening illness or death, or sudden loss of income resulting from theft or fraud. Financial hardship could include families who have no access to regular income because of refugee status.

## 2. Support for Families

Consideration is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short-term crisis on a confidential, case-by-case basis. We encourage parents experiencing financial stress, to contact our Business Manager to establish a payment plan and make payments on a regular basis. Further support options can be discussed in confidence, by calling the school office to arrange a time to speak with the Principal or Business Manager. The school's hardship arrangements include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty and may include:

- Payment Plans
- Reduced fees for a specified time period
- Waiving of fees — partial or full for a maximum of one term
- External funding sought where available
- Individual Contractual Arrangements

Financial Hardship Support Agreements will be bound by the following:

- School fee reduction/waiver is for a maximum of 10 school weeks (equivalent to one term). This may be offered over one term or spread over two consecutive terms.
- Applications for school fee reduction/waiver must be received prior to the beginning of the term in which the reduction/waive is requested.
- School fee reduction/waiver cannot be retrospective (for previous terms). This includes any outstanding Energy Contribution.
- The River School is limited to granting a maximum of three full fee waivers per term, to our school community.
- Eligibility of fee waivers/reductions are restricted to one full fee waive per family over the length of their enrolment at The River School. Any relaxing of this criteria is at the discretion of the Business Manager & Principal and in line with budget guidelines.
- School fee reduction/waiver applications, outside of the above criteria, are subject to the discretion of the Principal and must be in line with budget guidelines.

### 3. Authorisation

The River School Business Manager, in consultation with the Principal, will assess each case and make a decision based on the individual needs of each family.

Appeals against the decision can be made to the Board — Ananda Marga Education Ltd.

### 4. Procedure

To enter into a Financial Hardship agreement, applicants are required to obtain and complete an *Application for Waiver/Reduction of School (tuition) Fees* from the office. If requested, the Business Manager can assist with the completion of the form in total privacy. All information provided on the form will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

The application form includes a statement of the applicant's affairs indicating how the tuition and service fees will impose financial hardship on the applicant. It also requires the applicant to outline what they can afford to pay towards their child(ren)'s tuition and services fees.

Once the application form is completed, the applicant will meet with the Business Manager who will then consult with the Principal. The River School, through our financial department, will provide written confirmation of the agreed arrangement. This arrangement will be treated in the same manner as any other financial arrangement with the School in terms of expectations for timely payment and recovery of overdue amounts. The School will attempt to contact recipients by phone, mail, or email should the arrangement not be kept, prior to taking further credit management action.

Applicants may, as part of this process, be asked to submit evidence to a third party nominated by The River School to support the claim of hardship, and if that third party recommends engagement in budget and financial counseling, that may, at the School's discretion, be made a condition.

#### Other Charges

The River School will charge a fee for goods and services that are provided to supplement the learning experiences covered within a student's tuition. Examples might include a fee to cover the cost of an excursion, camp or other additional activities. Whilst most activities are considered an educational component of the School curriculum, these incidental charges cannot be waived as part of a school fee waiver. To apply for hardship assistance beyond tuition fees, please arrange an appointment with the Principal to discuss other options.

### 5. Community and Family Consideration

Adherence to this procedure will ensure that all enrolled families will be provided with a fair and equitable access to continued enrolment and fee payment in cases of financial hardship.

### 6. Forms

Please collect a financial hardship fee waiver form from the office or make an appointment to meet with the Principal or Business Manager, to discuss options.