Fees Policy

Purpose
This policy will provide a clear set of guidelines for:

- The setting, payment and collection of fees
- Ensuring the viability of Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care by setting appropriate fee charges
- Equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided.

Policy statement

Values
Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care is committed to:

- Providing responsible financial management of the service, which includes establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with the non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- Advising users of the service about how the programs are funded, including government support and parent fees

Scope
This policy applies to staff, the licensee and to parents/guardians whose child/ren is/are attending, or who wish to enrol a child at Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care.

Background and legislation
The Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations provide financial assistance to eligible families to assist with the cost of child care through Child Care Benefit and Child Care Tax Rebate under the Family Assistance Law.

The Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development requires that child care services have in place, and communicate to families, a comprehensive written fees policy:

- The Fees policy summary (Attachment 5) provides a summary of the Fees policy.
- The Fee schedules (Attachments 6) detail the fees charged by the service and the arrangements for the payment of fees, as required under regulations 40(1)(f) and 41(b) of the Children’s Services Regulations 2009.

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- Children’s Services Regulations 2009 (CSR)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Fees Policy

•  *Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*

**Definitions**

**Commonwealth Child Care Benefit (CCB):** Child Care Benefit is a Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare. All eligible families can receive some Child Care Benefit.

**Approved care:** Care provided by a service provider that has been approved by the Family Assistance Office to receive Child Care Benefit payments on behalf of eligible families. Most long day care, family day care, before- and after-school care are approved childcare providers.

**Registered care:** Care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends, kindergartens, occasional care services and outside school hours care services that are registered with the Family Assistance Office. Eligible families can receive some reimbursement of costs when using a registered care provider.

**Excursion/entertainment/service event charge:** An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children’s program needs. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service’s budget do not incur an additional charge. (Refer to the Excursions/service events policy for further details.)

**Fees:** A charge for a place within a program at the service.

**Late-collection charge:** A charge that may be imposed by the licensee when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/ren from the program (see Attachment 1, ‘Setting fees and other charges’)

**Other charges:** A charge for items not directly related to the provision of the children’s program, such as sun hats.

**Sources and related service policies**

**Sources**

**Service policies**

•  Complaints and grievances
•  Delivery and collection of children
•  Enrolment
•  Excursion/service events
•  Inclusion and equity
•  Privacy
•  Program participation

**Procedures**

**The licensee is responsible for:**

•  Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with the parents/guardians and staff and in line with the requirements of the DEECD and DEEWR
Fees Policy

• Developing a fee policy that balances the capacity of parent’s capability to pay, providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability
• Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way in the family’s first language where possible
• Setting fees according to the guidelines outlined in Attachment 1, ‘Setting fees and other charges’, of this policy
• Providing a copy of the Fee policy summary (Attachment 5), with the Fee schedules (Attachments 6), to all parents/guardians upon enrolment of their child and making the Fees policy readily accessible at the service (CSR r40[1f] and 41b)
• Collecting and receipting all fees as per the guidelines outlined in Attachments 2 of this policy
• Complying with the service’s Privacy policy in regard to any information it receives relating to the financial situation of parents/guardians and the payment/non-payment of fees
• Notifying parents/guardians within twenty-eight days of any changes to the arrangements for the payment of fees (CSR, r42)
• Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged by Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service as required by CSR r40f.

The staff are responsible for:
• Informing the licensee of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding the fees at the service
• Referring parents'/guardians’ questions in relation to this policy to the Outside School Hours Care Sub-Committee of the School Council

The parents/guardians are responsible for:
• Reading the Fee policy summary (Attachment 5) and Fee schedules (Attachments 6)
• Signing and complying with the Fee payment agreement form (Attachment 4)
• Notifying the contact person if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, the licensee will:
• Assess the effectiveness of the payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
• Review the current budget to determine fee income requirements
• Take into account feedback from staff and parents/guardians regarding the policy
• Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy
• Review the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
• Monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of the non-payment of fees.
Fees Policy

Attachments
Attachment 1: Setting fees and other charges
Attachment 2: Invoicing, receipting and collection of fees
Attachment 3: Procedures for late payments
Attachment 4: Fee payment agreement Outside School Hours Care
Attachment 5: Fees policy summary
Attachment 6: Fee schedule 2011

Authorisation
This policy was adopted by the Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Council at a School Council meeting on "[insert date]".

Review date: / /
Setting fees and other charges

1. Fees
As part of the budget development process, the licensee sets fees for the programs for the following year taking into consideration:

- Financial viability
- Level of government funding available
- Availability of other income sources, such as grants
- Reasonable expenditure, ensuring agreed program quality/standards

2. Payment options and procedures
The licensee will regularly review the payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families’ cultures and financial situations. Procedures for payment will be flexible and clearly communicated to all families.

3. Notification of fee changes during the year
Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances; for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget ‘break even’ point. Parents/guardians will be given notice 14 days in advance of any required fee increase.

Late collection charge
The licensee reserves the right to implement a late collection of children charge when parents/guardians are late in collecting a child/ren. In these situations the following procedures will apply:

- The qualified staff member will inform the parents/guardians/carer that if it continues the licensee will be notified and the family will be charged late fees.
- The late fee will be $15 for every 15 minutes or part thereof per family.

Child Care Benefit—Approved care (CCB)
Hamilton (gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care is an approved care provider and parents/guardians can claim CCB providing they meet the Family Assistance Office (FAO) work/training/study test. The rate is set by the Commonwealth Government and is claimed either as reduced fees or directly by parents/guardians from the FAO.

Parents/guardians can access information at www.familyassist.gov.au, or contact the local FAO.
Invoicing, receipting and collection of fees

Fee information will be provided to parents/guardians with the enrolment package. Fee information provided will include:

- Fee payment agreement
- Fee policy summary
- Fee schedule

Invoicing

- Families will be invoiced weekly in arrears.
- All booked care will be invoiced whether the child/ren attend or not. The only exception to this will be when the service is fully booked and the absent child’s place is filled by another child.
- Payment will be due within 5 business days.
- Invoices will be placed in the child/ren's communication pockets or emailed to families who subscribe to this service. Invoices not collected within one week will be posted.

Method of payment

Details of payment will be specified on the invoice: payment can be made by cash, cheque, money order or direct debit. Payments or direct debit notifications are to be placed in an envelope labelled with:

- The invoice number
- Family name
- Date
- Amount enclosed in the envelop

The envelop must then be deposited into the locked deposit box and details recorded in the payment record book.

Issue of receipts

Receipts will be provided for all fee payments and placed in the child/ren's communication pockets.

Difficulty in paying fees

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Coordinator to arrange suitable alternative payment arrangements, such as an instalment plan.
Late payment/non-payment of fees procedure

If the parents/guardians have not communicated the reasons for late or non-payment of fees, the following procedures will be implemented:

Step 1: A written reminder notice will be sent after ten business days of the due date stating fees are overdue, giving ten business days for payment. A copy of the current fees policy summary will be included and support options available. A copy of this letter will be kept on file. The letter will encourage the parents/guardians to contact the Coordinator. If contact is made, a record of the conversation will be recorded, a copy sent to the parents/guardians (if required) and a copy placed on file.

Step 2: If payment has not been received by the specified date or no contact has been made with the Coordinator/Administrator, the parents/guardians will be contacted by telephone to discuss alternative payment options and to develop an agreed payment plan. Minutes of contact/conversation will be kept on file. If a payment plan is agreed on, both parties will sign the agreed plan and a copy will be given to the parents/guardians and placed on file.

Step 3: If the parents/guardians fail to make a payment, the licensee will issue a second and final letter, requesting full payment within 10 business days, or attendance at a meeting to discuss alternative payment options (as per Step 2). The letter will be sent by registered mail and will include information on support options available.

Step 4: If the parents/guardians continue with the non-payment of fees, the licensee will notify the family that their placement(s) in the program(s) are suspended until such time as they engage in a payment plan and commence payment.

Step 5: If the payment plan drawn up and signed by both parties is not adhered to, the follow-up process will commence at Step 2.

Step 6: If, at the licensee’s discretion, a decision is made to withdraw the child’s place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided fourteen days’ notice by registered mail.

The Coordinator/Administrator and any licensee involved will ensure the Privacy policy of the service is complied with and other staff will not be involved in any stage of this process. Staff may be consulted on a child’s attendance rates and any other information required for the Coordinator/Administrator to fulfil their role. The Coordinator/Administrator and any other licensee members involved will ensure the service’s Privacy policy is complied with in relation to the family’s financial/personal situation.

Debt recovery

The licensee reserves the right to take action to recover debts owing to the service. This can include the engagement of debt collectors. Using a debt collector will be considered as a final option after attempts to implement other payment procedures have been offered.

Where a family owes $1,000.00 (one thousand dollars) to the service, the licensee reserves the right to not allow further placements in programs until all outstanding monies are paid, or a payment plan is agreed and adhered to by both parties.
Fee payment agreement Outside School Hours Care

Please complete this form and return it to Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care with the enrolment form.

Fee payment contract

Given name of child: _______________________________________________________

Parent’s/guardian’s full name: ______________________________________________

• I/we acknowledge that the Outside School Hours Care Program is dependent on fee income from families utilising the service.

• I/we understand that I/we are only entitled to apply to the Family Assistance Office to register for Child Care Benefit and Child Care Tax Rebate.

• I/we agree to pay fees by the due date on the invoice.

• I/we acknowledge that if fees are not paid by the due date, the licensee will implement the Fees policy late payment of fees procedures, which could result in the cancellation of my child’s place at the service.

• I/we agree that if our financial circumstances change and I/we are unable to pay as agreed, we will immediately notify the Hamilton (Gray St) Outside School Hours Care Service to discuss alternative payment options.

• I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read the service’s Fee policy summary, which sets out the procedure for fee payment.

Signed (parent/guardian): ____________________________ Date: ________________

Note: Invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care Fees policy.
Fees policy summary

1. Why fees are necessary?
Outside School Hours Care is only partially funded by the Australian Government under the Family Assistance Law through:

- Fee subsidies pay directly to eligible families or to the service on behalf of the family
- Child Care Tax Rebate paid directly to families
- Sustainability funding paid directly to the service

This service charges fees in order to meet the costs of delivering a quality program and service to our families.

2. How fees are set?
The licensee sets fees for the programs for the following year as part of the budget development process, taking into consideration:

- The expected utilisation level
- The financial viability of the service
- The level of government funding
- Availability of other income sources, such as grants
- Reasonable expenditure, ensuring agreed program quality/standards
- The capacity of parents to pay

Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances; for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget ‘break even’ point.

Other charges

3. Excursion/service event charge: This additional charge is required to cover the cost of special events or excursions that occur throughout the year in response to emerging children’s program needs and interests. Affordability and relevance to the children’s interests and the service program will be taken into consideration before a decision is made that will require families to pay this additional charge. (Refer to Excursions and service events policy.)

Events that are planned ahead are included as expenditure in the service’s budget and do not incur an additional charge.

4. Child Care Benefit (CCB)—Approved care

Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care is registered with the Family Assistance Office (FAO) as an approved care provider. Visit www.familyassist.gov.au for further information or telephone the FAO on 13 61 50.

5. Fee structure
This is set out in Attachment 6
Fees will be charged for booked care whether or not a child attends. The only exceptions to this occurs when the service is fully booked and the absent child’s place is taken by another child or the service is unable to provide care due to circumstance beyond the control of the service such as closure due to staff absence, extreme weather conditions etc.

6. Payment of accounts

Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact the Coordinator/Administrator to discuss payment options.

7. Unpaid fees

Fees not paid by the due date will be followed up with the following steps:

- An initial reminder letter stating fees are overdue, allowing ten working days for payment. The letter will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- If payment is not received, families will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss a payment plan and a range of support options available.
- Failure to attend the meeting and continued non-payment will result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that, unless payment is made within ten working days or a payment plan entered into, the child's place at the service may be suspended or cancelled. The letter will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- The licensee will continue to offer support and reserves the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
**Hamilton (Gray St) Primary School Outside School Hours Care**

**Fee schedule 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Operating Time</th>
<th>Fee per child</th>
<th>Includes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before School Care</td>
<td>6.45am to 8.50am</td>
<td>$25.43 per session</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School Care</td>
<td>3.30pm to 6.30pm</td>
<td>$14.91 per session</td>
<td>Afternoon tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation Care</td>
<td>6.45am to 6.30pm</td>
<td>$68.83 per session</td>
<td>Breakfast Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Free days</td>
<td>6.45am to 6.30pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Morning &amp; Afternoon tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Prep Wednesdays</td>
<td>8.50 to 3.30pm</td>
<td>Based on demand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Payment of fees**

Invoices will be issued weekly in arrears and must be paid by the due date.

**Late-collection charge**

The licensee reserves the right to implement a late collection of child(ren) charge when parents/guardians are late in collecting a child/ren. In these situations the following procedures will apply:

- The qualified staff member will inform the parents/guardians/carer that if it continues the licensee will be notified and the family will be charged a late fee.
- If after the reminder, the parents/guardians/carer is late, a fee of $15 for every 15 minutes or part thereof will be charged.