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PRIME MINISTER

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Independent State of Papua New Guinea

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

HON. KINOKA FEO, MP
ACTING MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

MINISTERIAL POLICY STATEMENT 01/2026

GOVERNMENT FREE EDUCATION POLICY FOR 2026 FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION SECTOR SCHOOLS

TO: ALL PARENTS, SCHOOL HEADS, GOVERNING BOARDS AND EDUCATION AUTHORITIES.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Ministerial Policy Statement (MPS) outlines the Marape-Rosso Government Free Education Policy (GFEP) for 2026. The policy confirms that free education will continue in 2026, with the government covering all tuition and project fees for students enrolled in all registered schools across the national education system.

1.2. The Government has allocated over K7.981 billion in school grants since 2012, leading to higher enrolment, improved retention rates, greater participation in girls' education, expanded FODE programs, and support for the New 1-6-6 School structure and Early Childhood Education (ECE), all aiming to fulfill the Marape-Rosso government policy of "leaving no child behind".

2. EDUCATION REMAINS THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITY

2.1. This year's GFEP appropriation by the Marape – Rosso government has increased by 10% as shown below;

Year	Total Allocation K' Million
2026	**904.500**
2025	859.500
2024	850.935
2023	766.400
2022	732.000

2.2. Aligned with the constitution's goal of equality and participation, the GFEP aims to promote equity by distributing our national wealth throughout the country. GFE policy provides direct grants to schools and students regardless of background, and ensuring all students benefit nationwide.

3. THE CHANGES IN THE 2026 GFE REVISED POLICY

3.1 The Government Tuition Fee Subsidy (GTFS) Policy has been revised and is now called the **"Government Free Education Policy (GFEP)**.

3.2 The GFE policy covers schools in the National Education System that are registered with the National Department of Education and shall benefit from GFEP grants are: ***(a) Early Childhood Centers, (b) Primary Schools (c) Secondary Schools (d) National High Schools, (e) Vocational Schools (f) Special Education Centers (g) Flexible Open and Distance Education services and (h) Permitted Schools.***

4. GFEP FUNDING FOR 2026

In 2026, the Government Free Education (GFE) Policy received a budget of **K904.500 million**, a 10% increase from 2025. The 2026 budget breakdown has three main components:

2026 BUDGET	**904,500,000.00**
GRANTS TO SCHOOLS (80%)	**595,200,000.00**
COMMODITY COMPONENT (20%)	**148,000,000.00**
PROJECT FEE	**160,000,000.00**
TOTAL	**K904,500,000.00**

5. GFE POLICY COMPONENTS

The Government's Free Education Policy maintains two components.

5.1 SCHOOL OPERATION AND FUNCTIONAL GRANTS (OFG) (80%)

The SOFG grants are disbursed directly to schools. Schools in decentralized provinces will continue to have their grants paid by the Provincial Divisional of Education through their respective GFE Trust Accounts.

5.2 COMMODITY COMPONENT (20%) WHICH SUPPORTS ENGLISH, SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS AND BASIC SCHOOL MATERIALS

The commodity component, accounting for 20% of the overall allocation, is dedicated to enhancing core subjects such as English, Science, and Mathematics and eLearning. It also covers the provision of essential basic school materials to ensure that students have the necessary resources for effective learning. This approach aims to strengthen foundational skills and improve educational outcomes across all schools.

i. Basic Teaching and Learning materials including TVET Equipment – 17%
ii. Interventions in English, Science and Mathematics, ACE, ECE Kits – 2%
iii. eLearning – Facilities and Resources (ICT)– 1%

6. SCHOOL FEES LIMIT FOR 2026

6.1 The National Education Board (NEB) has established school fee limits based on the findings of the 2024 Unit Cost study. These limits are determined in accordance with the National Economic and Fiscal Commission (NEFC) PNG Access Remote Index (PARI) categories: 1) Highly Accessible (HA), 2) Accessible (A), 3) Moderately Accessible (MA), 4) Remote, 5) Very Remote (VRE), and 6) Extremely Remote (ER).

6.2 The payment calculations per students will be as follows:

2026 NEBFEE LIMIT_PARI									
PARI	ECE	Elementary	Primary	Secondary		NSOE		Vocational	
				DAY	BOARDING	DAY	BOARDING	DAY	BOARDING
HA	80.52	93.44	173.95	591.44	1,341.34	1,185.19	2,085.07	652.03	1,401.98
A	104.37	123.23	227.63	770.37	1,520.27	1,541.61	2,441.43	860.82	1,610.72
MA	127.23	149,10	275.24	336.37	1,635.27	1,873.69	2,773.57	1,045.71	2,795.61
R	286.47	206.76	384.69	1,303.16	2,053.05	2,607.99	3,507.87	1,456.24	2,206.14
VR	239.56	279.32	518.88	1,758.42	2,508.32	3,519.79	4,419.67	1,965.18	2,715.08
ER	378.72	440.35	819.07	2,776.30	3,526.20	5,556.65	6,456.54	1,313.10	2,063.00
ERC	400.00								
FODE	165.00								
P	100.00								

6.3 The fee limits for 2026 have been updated: NSoE grants will increase by 20%, IERC grants will double, and FODE grants will go up by 50%. Boarding students will have a minimal increase.

6.4 Provincial Governments and Districts are requested to support schools in boarding and infrastructure costs from PSIP and DSIP funding.

6.5 All payment reports are available on our website: www.education.gov.pg.

7. PROJECT FEES

The government will continue to fund project fees and has allocated K160 million this year that will be paid directly into school accounts based on the NEB fee limit. Schools will use this funding for their capital works or needs.

8. CHURCH AGENCY FEES

Church agency fees are to be paid by each student attending a church agency school as per the Education Act, 1983. *(Refer to Secretary's circular for maximum limits set.)* Agency Schools are to pay each their respective church agency fee.

9. PERMITTED SCHOOLS FEES

The National Government will pay K100 per child for PNG citizen students ONLY enrolled in approved Permitted Schools registered with the National Department of Education. *(Refer to Secretary's circular for eligibility criteria set.)*

10. PHASING OUT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN 2026

Starting in 2026, elementary schools will no longer get grants directly; instead, funds will go to central Primary Schools under the 1-6-6 School restructure policy. The Primary School's Board and administration will now oversee and support their feeder elementary schools.
Provinces must promptly submit their provincial school cluster plans to the department.

11. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTRES

ECE centers are required to register with the department and meet its minimum standards. Once formally registered, ECE centers become eligible for GFE grants.

12. TVET Equipment Vouchers

In 2026, for the first time the Department of Education will trial a TVET Equipment Voucher System. The TVET Equipment Vouchers Grant will be provided to TVET institutions to support the procurement of specialized equipment and resources. This initiative aims to enhance practical learning experiences and ensure that students are equipped with industry-relevant skills. Schools must follow the department's guidelines for requesting and utilizing these vouchers to ensure transparency and accountability in resource allocation.

13. PARENTS RESPONSIBILITY

13.1 Whilst the Government is paying the bulk of a child's education, parents are still responsible for the education of their children too. The GFEP implementation guideline specifies the area parents should support. These include.
a) Healthy daily meals;
b) Clothes/Uniforms; and Footwear;
c) Study table and solar lights at home;
d) Transport; and
e) Self-reliance Projects initiated by the school and approved by P&C and PEBS. These activities are voluntary. The Project must be specific by name, have a total budget, a scope of works and duration of implementation.

13.2 Maximum Limits for Self-reliance Projects initiated by the school must be approved by the Parents and Citizens Association, and approved by the PEB. No school is to collect any fee not approved by both the P&C and the PEB. The Self reliance Projects support must be below the maximum fees, as set out below.

Sector	Maximum
Primary Schools	No more than K500.00 per child per year.
High Schools, Secondary, NSOE	No more than K1000.00 per child per year.

13.3 There should be no other fees such as registration, admission, ID cards, advance, transfer and whatsoever charged by any school.

14. STUDENTS SHOULD NOT BE DENIED THEIR RIGHT TO EDUCATION

NO school administration or governing board is to refuse any child from enrolling in a school or attending classes for non-payment of any form of fees. Whilst every child has the right to education, schools also need funds to operate, therefore parents are encouraged to cooperate with school boards and involve in any self-reliance activities to support schools.
Any school found to be denying students right to education will be severely dealt with including suspension from duties without pay. **Heads of schools will be held accountable.**

15. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

A new accounting system, the P**NG School Based Financial Management System,** will be implemented in 2026 to ensure schools comply. This unified approach is designed to improve discipline, transparency, and effective use of funds. The rollout will begin with Secondary/PHS/NSoE schools, followed by Vocational Centres and then Primary schools.

16. SCHOOL ACQUITTALS

An Acquittal Software Application will be launched in all schools this year. Once implemented, school heads must submit Terms 1 and 2 acquittals by June to qualify for Term 3 and 4 grants; Terms 3 and 4 acquittals are due before January for the following year's grant. School heads are accountable for managing and spending GFE funds. Mandatory financial audits by inspectors and provincial GFE monitoring officers will be conducted, and all financial reports must address both achievements and gaps in approved SLIP plans.

Parents and the public can find out how much each school is receiving on our website and hold schools accountable.

17. SCHOOL CENSUS DATA

Head teacher must be responsible for submitting accurate real-time data through the National School Census Forms (NSCF) annually by **31st of March** each year to receive their grants. *(Refer to Secretary's circular for Eligibility criteria to receive GFE grants.)*

18. PARTNERSHIP WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AND DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES

Provincial Governments and District Development Authorities oversee general education for students within their regions. We encourage these authorities to actively support the growth and maintenance plans of their local schools through collaborative efforts.

19. MANDATORY SELF RELIANCE FOR SCHOOLS TO RAISE 10% OF ITS REVENUE

Self-reliance is a standing policy of the department. Schools should take-up self-reliance projects and support development initiatives when the Government is paying full tuition in 2026. Schools should not become too dependent on the Government.

This direction is issued for every school to generate 10% of its annual school budget through self-reliance projects in 2026.

20. CONCLUSION

The Government is dedicated to providing all students with a high-quality, and standards-based education within the 1-6-6 school structure. This includes maintaining a robust standards assurance system and offering an educational framework that supports both exceptionally gifted students through a locally developed, yet globally competitive STEM curriculum at our national schools of excellence as well as other education pathways.
I encourage all parents and stakeholders to continue their valuable support to ensure that schools remain fully operational throughout the 2026 academic year.
Any further explanation of the policy can be obtained from the Department of Education Website: **www.education.gov.pg** or by sending an email to: **gtfsinfo@education.gov.pg** or calling phones: **3288800/72668181/71460383.**

Authorized by:

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27th January 2026