



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of the Secretary

SECRETARY'S CIRCULAR INSTRUCTION NO: 01/2026

DATE: 27/01/2026

FILE: CM2-4-2

**TO: ALL CHAIRPERSONS OF PROVINCIAL EDUCATION
BOARDS
ALL CHAIRPERSONS OF GOVERNING COUNCILS
ALL CHAIRPERSONS OF BOARDS OF GOVERNORS
ALL CHAIRPERSONS OF BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT
ALL PRINCIPALS, MANAGERS AND HEAD TEACHERS
ALL SCHOOL INSPECTORS
ALL CHURCH EDUCATION SECRETARIES
ALL PARENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

**SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT FREE EDUCATION POLICY FOR 2026 FOR
THE GENERAL EDUCATION SECTOR SCHOOLS**

1. AUTHORITY:

This Secretary's Circular Instruction (SCI) is issued under Section 28 and other relevant sections of the *National Education Act 1983*. It must be read in conjunction with the Ministerial Policy Statement (MPS) 01/2026 to ensure full compliance with national directives.

2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this SCI is to provide clear instructions to compel all education boards, provincial divisions, and school agencies to implement the MPS 01/2026. It details the operational components and the mandatory processes required to implement the Government Free Education Policy (GFEP) for the 2026 academic year.

3. APPLICATION:

This instruction applies to every Early Childhood Center, Primary school, High school, Secondary school, National School of Excellence (NSoE), Vocational Centre, FODE, and IERC. It covers all institutions operating under the National Education System, including registered permitted private schools.

4. BACKGROUND:

4.1 Since 2012, the Government has allocated over K9 billion in school grants to schools to give each child their right to education and "leaving no child behind" policy. The 2026 review of the GFEP introduces interventions to improve equity by distributing national wealth through grants based on school location and accessibility.

5. THE 2026 GFE REVISED POLICY:

5.1 The Government Tuition Fee Subsidy (GTFS) has been officially renamed the "Government Free Education Policy (GFEP)." Registered schools across all sectors, including Special Education Centers and Permitted Schools, are eligible for support under this revised policy.

6. GFE POLICY COMPONENTS:

6.1 The policy is divided into two main components. The School Operation and Functional Grants (SOFG) comprise 80% of the funding and are disbursed directly to schools.

6.2 Morobe, Enga, East New Britain and Milne Bay consistent with the signed MOAs will receive funds to disburse and manage funds through respective Provincial Trust Accounts. There will be additional provinces in 2026.

6.3. The remaining 20% is the Commodity Component, dedicated to English, Science, Mathematics, eLearning, and basic school materials.

6.4 The breakup of the commodity component is as follows;

- 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%)

6.5. Specific Circulars will be issued to enable the implementation of the above components.

7. SCHOOL FEES LIMIT FOR 2026:

7.1 The National Education Board (NEB) has established fee limits using the 2024 Unit Cost study and the PNG Access Remote Index (PARI). These limits ensure funding is tailored to geographic challenges, with specific grant increases of 20% for NSoEs, 50% for FODE, and a doubling of grants for IERCs.

7.2 The payment calculations per students will be as follows;

PARI CATEGORIES	ECE	ELEMENTARY	PRIMARY	SECONDARY (DAY)	SECONDARY (BOARDING)	NSOE (DAY)	NSOE (BOARDING)	VOCATIONAL (DAY)	VOCATIONAL (BOARDING)
Highly Accessible	80.52	93.44	173.95	591.44	1,341.34	1,185.19	2,085.07	652.08	1,401.98
Accessible	104.37	123.26	227.63	770.37	1,520.27	1,541.61	2,441.49	860.82	1,610.72
Moderately Accessible	127.23	149.1	276.34	936.37	1,686.27	1,873.69	2,773.57	1,045.71	1,795.61
Remote	286.47	206.76	384.69	1,303.16	2,053.06	2,607.99	3,507.87	1,456.24	2,206.14
Very Remote	239.56	279.32	518.88	1,758.42	2,508.32	3,519.79	4,419.67	1,965.18	2,715.08
Extremely Remote	378.72	440.35	819.07	2,776.30	3,526.20	5,556.65	6,456.54	1,313.10	2,063.00

8. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

8.1 Schools must meet five conditions to receive grants;

- i. formal registration with a unique code,
- ii. submission of enrollment data,
- iii. active status with teachers on the payroll,
- iv. an operating commercial bank account, and
- v. submission of acquittals per schedule under 16.2.

9. PROJECT FEES:

9.1 Project fees that used to be collected by schools have been taken over by the state. A total of K160 million has been allocated this year, and payments will be made directly into school accounts based on established NEB fee limits.

9.2. Project fees should be budgeted to support Schools Learning and Improvement Plans.

10. CHURCH AGENCY FEES:

10.1 Students attending church agency schools are required to pay agency fees as per the *Education Act 1983*. While Provincial Education Boards set these

fees, they must not exceed K5 for Elementary, K7 for Primary and K10 for High/Secondary and Vocational students.

11. PERMITTED SCHOOLS FEES:

- 11.1 The Government will pay K100 per child for PNG students enrolled in registered Permitted Schools.
- 11.2 To receive these grants, permitted schools must have (a) a unique registration code, (b) submit the 2026 School Census Forms , and (c) submit verified census data showing student nationality, and maintain a minimum of 30 students enrolled in their schools.

12. PHASING OUT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

- 12.1 Starting in 2026, under the 1-6-6 Policy, elementary schools come under respective primary schools.
- 12.2. GFEP grants for Preparatory, Grade 1 and Grade 2 (in 'former' elementary schools) will be funneled to the central primary schools to administer.
- 12.3 Provinces must submit updated 1-6-6 cluster plans to the Department to facilitate this transition.
- 12.4. Payments for Preparatory, Gr1, and Gr 2 students are held back to finalise the clusters. By the end of February funds will be remitted to primary schools.

13. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) CENTRES:

- 13.1 ECE centers must register with the Department and meet specific minimum standards.
- 13.2 Once formal registration is confirmed, these centers become eligible for GFE grants.

14. TVET EQUIPMENT VOUCHERS:

- 14.1 A TVET Equipment Voucher System will be trialed in 2026 to ensure TVET schools are equipped with industry-relevant tools and equipment to provide practical learning experiences.
- 14.2 All VETs are directed to take stock of their resources and equipment's consult their SLIP and to ensure they benefit from the voucher system.

14.3 A separate circular instruction will be sent to administer this voucher system.

15. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY:

15.1 The PNG School Based Financial Management System (PNG-SFMS) is now the only standardized system for all school levels.

15.2 This mandatory system is designed to restore discipline and ensure that funds are spent on intended educational outcomes.

15.3 The initiative will be rolled out first to all High/Secondary Schools, National Schools of Excellence (NSOE), and Vocational schools, in 2026, followed by a subsequent rollout to Primary and Early Childhood Education (ECE) schools.

15.4 Schools will cease to use different accounting systems once the PNG-SFMS is introduced.

16. SCHOOL ACQUITTALS:

16.1 A new Acquittal Software Application will be rolled out this year.

16.2. School heads must use this application to submit acquittals to receive new funding. The deadlines for acquittals will be as follows:

Term funding	Deadline to Acquit	Payments Eligible to receive
Term 1	March 31	Term 3 of current Year
Term 2	June 31	Term 4 of current year
Term 3	September 31	Term 1 Next Year
Term 4	December 31	Term 2 Next Year

16.2 The Department maintains a strict "No Acquittals – No GFEP Grants" policy to ensure financial accountability.

17. SCHOOL CENSUS DATA:

17.1 GFEP grants are disbursed based on verified enrollment data. Schools that fail to submit their National School Census Forms by 31 March 2026 risk receiving any payment at all.

17.2 All data must be verified by local School Inspectors.

17.3. Budgeting and funding is managed using annual accounting system. If you fail to submit data and on time, your school's grants funds will be returned to consolidated accounts and you will miss out.

18. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY:

18.1 While the government covers tuition, parents remain responsible for daily meals, uniforms, footwear, transport, and home study resources and a P&C and PEB approved Voluntary Parental Self Reliance Project.

18.2. The Voluntary Parental Self Reliance Project Fee MUST STRICTLY follow the following conditions.

- a) Plan a Project per your SLIP;
- b) Scope the Project (Name the project, Steps and dates of implementation, method of procurement, Cost of the Project, Purpose, where funds will be kept, when will it be completed);
- c) Present (b) to P&C association and take minute with list of attendees; and their decision. Decision must include how much each student must pay throughout the year.
- d) Submit to PEB to get PEB Approval; and
- e) If both P& C and PEB approve collect fees over a period of more that two terms.

18.3. Any school head that allows collection of parental contributions without following the above conditions will be in breach of legal instructions and will face disciplinary charges.

18.4 These projects must be approved by the P&C Association and the PEB, with maximum fee limits of K500 for Primary and K1, 000 for High School, Secondary and NSOE students.

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

18.5 No school is permitted to charge fees for registration, admission, ID cards, or transfers.

19. PARTNERSHIP WITH PROVINCE AND DISTRICTS:

19.1 Provincial Governments and District Development Authorities are urged to support their local schools' infrastructure and development plans. This partnership is essential for the long-term sustenance of the general education sector within their jurisdictions.

20. RIGHT TO EDUCATION:

- 20.1 No student shall be denied enrollment or class attendance due to non-payment of any fees. Enrolment and attendance is Free.
- 20.2 There shall be **no fees** such as admission, registration, transfer-in, insurance, reinstatement, examinations, or any other charges imposed on any student.
- 20.3 School administrations found denying this right will face severe penalties, including suspension from duties without pay. **School heads will be held personally accountable.**

21. MANDATORY SELF-RELIANCE

- 21.1 Every school is directed to generate 10% of its annual budget through legal self-reliance projects.

22. GFEP IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES 2026 AND CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- 22.1 Detailed guidelines of the 2026 GFEP are available on the DOE website.
- 22.2 All school heads and governing boards are urged to study these documents to ensure they fully understand and implement the policy according to national standards.
- 22.3. The following are the contacts for further explanation and queries:

Locations	Officers/Emails	Phone & WhatsApp
4 th Floor Vulupindi Haus, Waigani. NCD. www.education.gov.pg	1. Gii_Kua@education.gov.pg 2. Joseph_Tounokon@education.gov.pg	72668181 71460383

23. CONCLUSION

All stakeholders must comply with this Circular to ensure schools remain operational throughout 2026 and students receive their education without undue impediments.

Approved by:

**UKE KOMBRA PhD, OBE
SECRETARY**

