

Common Donations Queries

General information

When is the deadline to opt in to the donations scheme?

The decision to opt-in to the donations scheme is an annual one. The opt-in process for the donations scheme is normally tied to the July roll returns.

When you submit your July roll return you will be prompted to confirm if you are choosing to opt in to the donations scheme for the following school year. If you opt-in through this process, no more action is required.

Boards that host teen parent units, activity centres or other attached units have to complete a separate opt-in process by completing either the donations scheme [late opt-in form](#) or by emailing resourcing@education.govt.nz.

This process also allows boards whose EQI for the following year is 432 or higher, and who didn't opt-in when they submitted their July roll return, to opt into the scheme. The late opt-in process closes in late November each year.

If you have any questions regarding the donations scheme, contact our team on (04) 463 8383 or email resourcing@education.govt.nz.

What information do we need to provide to opt in?

In addition to the declaration form, boards are required to record the resolution to opt-in to the donations scheme in their board minutes. This does not need to be sent to the Ministry.

When will donations funding be paid to boards?

Donations funding is paid in a lump sum as part of your January Operational Funding Instalment.

How is the funding calculated?

The donations scheme funding is calculated using a [per student rate](#), and the previous year's July roll. The July roll is the most recent confirmed roll and for most schools, it is also the most favourable roll to use.

Is donations funding recalculated for roll increases?

Donations funding is automatically reviewed and increased if schools have experienced roll growth between their July roll return and their March roll return. Your school will receive a top-up payment in the quarter 2 instalment at the beginning of April.

Do international students get counted in the calculation of donations scheme funding for a school?

No. International students are not included in the school roll that is used to calculate your school's operational funding. The same rule applies to the calculation of donations scheme funding because tuition fees charged to international students are presumed to cover all their costs.

Can a school partially opt-in across different year groups?

A condition of receiving school donations scheme funding is that the school board does not seek or receive any solicited voluntary payments from parents or whānau. That means that there's no provision to opt in or out by student year level as, by opting in, a school board makes a resolution not to seek any voluntary payments; a partial opt in is not possible.

Eligibility criteria

How will the donations scheme eligibility change with deciles being phased out?

In January 2023, the decile system was phased out. Eligibility for the Donations scheme is now based on the Equity Index (EQI). [Read more about the EQI](#). Schools with an EQI number of 432 or higher can opt-in to the scheme.

Schools that were previously eligible for the donations scheme in the past but have an EQI of 431 and below can continue to opt-in to the scheme, however they must continue to opt-in annually to retain this eligibility. If a school misses a year, it can't re-enter the donations scheme until it regains eligibility.

Why is the donations scheme only open to schools with an EQI of 432 and above?

The Equity Index (EQI) provides an indicator of which schools face greater socio-economic barriers to student achievement. We use the EQI to target funding to state and state-integrated schools, to help them overcome any barriers to students' educational achievement due to socioeconomic circumstances.

Why are private schools not eligible?

Families choose to enrol their children in private schools with the understanding they will be charged fees, and private schools have the freedom to set their fees at any level they see fit. Private schools are not required to provide free enrolment and free education. These schools currently receive a small per-student subsidy from the Government as a contribution towards the cost of curriculum delivery.

By contrast, state and state-integrated schools are legally required to provide free education and enrolment, and the Government funding they receive is intended to cover the full costs of meeting this obligation. School donations are voluntary and parents and whānau can choose to pay them in full, in part or not at all.

How do I know what my school's EQI number is?

Schools were provided their EQI number via the Secure Data Portal, but you can also find this information on [The Equity Index](#).

Our school isn't eligible to opt in. How can the Ministry help our financial planning so we don't need to rely on donations from parents and whānau?

[Contact your local Ministry of Education office](#) to discuss what guidance and support might be available.

Guidelines on what schools can charge for

What can schools ask parents and whānau to pay for?

The most important thing is that the donations scheme does not change the long-standing entitlement of students to free education.

[Our web guidance](#) makes it clear what parents and whānau can be asked to pay for and what their obligations are for paying. As a guide, schools may request donations towards the cost of curriculum delivery but cannot compel or enforce payment for items that are part of this. Schools can ask parents and whānau to pay for goods or services provided by the school when they are optional and where they have clearly agreed to pay.

Boards may charge for sports trips or activities that are outside the curriculum, for example school sports teams. Participation in these activities is optional and schools can enforce payment where they have agreed that a child can participate. Any charge should be made clear in advance. It should also be made clear that participation in these types of activities is voluntary.

If parents or whānau choose to purchase stationery from the school then payment can be enforced, however parents or whānau should not be compelled to buy stationery from the school. Textbooks and compulsory workbooks are curriculum-related, so parents and whānau cannot be charged. If it is an optional workbook which parents or whānau have agreed to purchase, the school can charge. If students are required to provide calculators or devices, then that is curriculum-related and so parents and whānau cannot be charged or be required to provide the equipment.

Another example is course materials. Parents cannot be charged for materials used in delivering the curriculum. This includes cooking ingredients for a food technology class. Food eaten as part of a food technology class is curriculum because students need to taste the food they prepare to ensure it is fit for consumption (sensory evaluation). Parents can be charged for the cost of materials when they have agreed to take home items such as a letterbox or clothing.

If your school decides to opt-in to the donations scheme your Board cannot ask parents and caregivers for any donations, unless they are for a school camp.

Opting in to the donations scheme does not affect a Board's ability to fundraise through the sale of goods and services, for example running a school fair or selling raffle tickets. For more, read our main page on [Fees, charges and donations](#).

If you are concerned that a school is not requesting donations in an appropriate way, you can [contact your local Ministry of Education office](#).

Can schools ask for payment for school camps?

Many schools offer camps as part of their curriculum. A camp is considered curriculum-related if there is an expectation that students attend, or it is part of

coursework. Boards may request donations towards the cost of these camps but cannot compel or enforce payment as has always been the case. The most important thing is that this long-standing requirement has not changed. Students may not be excluded from attending a camp or going on a trip that is part of curriculum delivery because of an inability or unwillingness to pay a donation towards the cost.

If a trip is not part of the curriculum (for example, sports tournament where participation is voluntary), boards may charge parents or whānau a fee as this is considered a purchase of a good or service.

For the purposes of the donations scheme, a school camp is defined as any curriculum-related activity where students are expected to stay overnight as part of the activity. Some examples of activities covered by this definition include Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) camps, multi-day tramp and senior school leadership camp.

Will I still need to pay attendance dues for my child to attend a state-integrated school?

Yes. Proprietors of state-integrated schools may charge attendance dues. This is the only compulsory payment in the schooling system. If the board of a state-integrated school decides to opt-in to the donations scheme, this does not affect the proprietor's ability to charge attendance dues.

Why are separate bodies associated with the school still allowed to ask for donations?

School boards make the decision on whether to opt-in to the donations scheme. However, separate legal entities associated with a school, such as a parent-teacher association or a proprietor of a state-integrated school or any other organisation or individual, are not subject to the agreement. This means that these separate entities can continue to request donations from parents and whānau.

Our [Fees, charges and donations](#) guidance provides more details.

Can parents/whānau still make a donation to their child's school if they want to?

Parents and whānau are still free to make any donations they wish to a school. Schools that opt in to the donations scheme are required to stop asking for donations (with the exception of school camps), but this does not restrict their ability to receive donations that parents and whānau (or any other individual or organisation) may wish to give.

Can participating schools still get parents and whānau involved in fundraising activities?

All schools are welcome to run fundraising activities such as school fairs. Schools cannot compel students or their parents or whānau to pay for or take part in fundraising activities.

Won't schools with a EQI number below 431 ask for higher donations because they can't get this funding?

Boards that choose to request donations are free to ask for any amounts they choose. Parents and whānau are free to choose whether to pay these in full, in part or not at all.

Rules and monitoring of compliance

Are there rules around what schools can spend this additional funding on?

The funding that boards receive by participating in the donations scheme will be paid as a component of their operational funding grant. Although operational funding for schools is broken into different components, the majority of the various funds are not 'tagged'. This means a board can decide what the funding is used for.

All money received by boards, whatever the source, are public funds – and boards are accountable for all of their expenditure.

Can a school opt out of this policy at a later date?

Once a board has opted in to the donations scheme it must remain in the scheme for the full school year. It's not possible to opt out mid-year as the payments are made at the beginning of the year.

All schools are required to opt in annually for the following school year and you will be prompted to do this as part of your July roll return.

What will happen if participating schools keep asking for donations?

New legislation passed by Parliament will allow us to recover funding from boards that continue to ask for donations while receiving the per student per year payment except for overnight camps.

We will follow up on any complaints received about schools' practices.

How will schools be monitored?

We will assist schools with complying with the conditions of the donations scheme and the Education and Training Act 2020.

If we find a school to be non-compliant, in the first instance, we will work with them to ensure they rectify the situation within an agreed period.

We will monitor and intervene where there is evidence of a breach of the donations scheme requirements. If a board of a school breaches the donation scheme's requirements, we may reduce future payments made to the board to recover the donations scheme funding provided. We may also withdraw the school from the donations scheme and/or prevent them from joining in future years.