Doncaster Gardens Primary School
Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy

Philosophical Basis:
The community expects high standards of integrity and impartiality from Victorian public sector employees and school councillors. These individuals must not accept gifts, benefits or hospitality from people seeking to unfairly influence their decisions. Whenever Department employees, school council employees or school councillors do accept gifts, they must always act fairly and objectively and maintain public trust by being honest, open and transparent.
This policy will guide all individuals as to what they need to do when considering whether to accept gifts, benefits and hospitality. It is underpinned by the integrity and impartiality values and principles specified in the Public Administration Act 2004, the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees and the School Council Code of Conduct.

Guidelines:
The minimum requirements apply to all staff (including principals and assistant principals) and school councillors. The minimum accountabilities also apply to the Principal (excluding assistant principals).

The minimum requirements for individuals are that they:
- do not solicit gifts, benefits or hospitality
- refuse all offers of gifts, benefits or hospitality from people or organisations about which they are likely to make decisions, eg tender processes, procurement, licensing or regulation
- refuse all offers of money or items easily converted to money, such as shares
- refuse bribes and report bribery attempts to their Principal
- seek advice from their Principal or other appropriate delegate if unsure about how to respond to an offer of a gift, benefit or hospitality of more than nominal value.

The minimum accountabilities for the Principal are that they:
- promulgate and establish awareness and compliance with the Gifts, Benefits, and Hospitality policy and Guidelines with all staff and school councillors
- reinforce to all staff and school councillors that a breach of gifts, benefits and hospitality procedures could constitute a breach of binding codes of conduct and result in disciplinary action
- ensure records are kept of accepted gifts, benefits and hospitality of more than nominal value and that such records are subject to regular scrutiny, including review by the audit committee.

Implementation:
Individuals must exercise particular care in accepting gifts, benefits or hospitality if:
- the donor person, company or organisation is involved in a tender process with the Department or school, or the donor person or organisation is the subject of, or affected by, a decision within the Department or school’s discretionary power or significant influence
- the person, company or organisation is in a contractual relationship with the Victorian Government or school council, or
- the employee or school councillor has been offered gifts of any kind from the same donor more than once in the last year.

Staff or school councillors may accept benefits and hospitality, such as invitations to official functions or events of reasonable value, as long as they are related to the business of the school, and provided that they do not involve a conflict of interest or create a perception that the staff member or school councillor will be unduly influenced by accepting the benefit or hospitality. In all cases the benefit or hospitality should be proportionate to the occasion.
Benefits and hospitality in relation to for-profit organisations sponsoring conferences or industry tours should generally be declined, unless reasons why there is no conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest or improper influence can be demonstrated. However, if attendance at the conference or industry tour is in the public interest, then the school should consider paying for the travel and accommodation.

Gifts of seemingly excessive value should not be accepted. The only exception to this is when failure to accept the gift, benefit or hospitality is likely to cause embarrassment or insult to the donor.

Gifts of any value must never be accepted if:
- the donor or reasonable observer would perceive that acceptance would create an obligation to the donor, particularly if the value of the gift is disproportionate to the circumstances in which it is offered
- the gift is likely to influence a staff member or school councillor in the course of their duties or where acceptance could cause a conflict of interest
- the organisation’s primary purpose is to lobby Ministers, Members of Parliament or agencies
- the gift is an offer of money or anything readily convertible into money (e.g. shares), or the organisation or individual has a connection with a tender process or a decision over which the school could be perceived to have influence.

Staff and school councillors may keep token gifts such as a box of chocolates, for the work they have done. In limited circumstances, staff and school councillors may be able to keep a gift worth $100 or more, but less than $500, subject to the documented approval of their school council. The school Principal may also consider offering the staff member or school councillor the option of purchasing the gift at market value. Gifts worth $500 or more must be surrendered to the school under all circumstances. Staff and school councillors may purchase a gift worth more than $500 from the school, with the school council’s written approval, provided that no other public entity (e.g. Museums Victoria) has expressed interest in retaining the gift.

For school-based employees and school councillors, acceptance and offers of a gift worth more than $100 (nominal value) must be formally registered on the school’s gift register. Where a school gift register does not exist, principals are required to institute one and record the following information for each gift:
- recipient’s name
- donor’s name and organisation
- location of the gift
- description and estimated value
- date, time and place of offer
- decision taken on the gift
- Principal’s or school council president’s signature

The gift register will be monitored by the Principal and annually reviewed by the school council.

A similar gift/donation register will be instituted and maintained by the Parents & Friends Association and Fête Committee to record details of all gifts and donations above the value of $100. This applies to the donations and gifts which are to be used as prizes and auction items for such events as raffles and silent auctions.

Evaluation:
This policy will be reviewed every three years as part of the policy review cycle.

September 2013