

Parent Payment

POLICY

PURPOSE

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

RATIONALE

The Victorian community shares a vision to build an education system that champions excellence and ensures that every child and young person has access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Schools are best placed to make local decisions which ensure that all students can access a broad range of learning opportunities that support their expectations and promote their aspirations as they move through the education system. Parent contribution, in all forms, assists schools to provide an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by school communities.

Learning and teaching programs vary across schools based on local needs and circumstances and reflect each school's priorities, decisions and resources. This, in turn, informs the parent payment charges approved by school councils that may vary from one school to the next.

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS CHARGE FOR?

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for instruction in the standard curriculum program to be free to all students in government schools. School councils are responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents¹ under three categories only- Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Financial Contributions.

- **Essential Student Learning Items** are those items, activities or services that are essential to support student learning of the standard curriculum. These are items that the school considers essential for all students and which students take possession of. Parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the school where practical and appropriate.
- **Optional Items** are those items, activities or services that are offered in addition to or support instruction in the standard curriculum program. These are provided on a user-pays basis so that if parents choose to access them for students, they are required to pay for them.
- **Voluntary Financial Contributions**
Parents can be invited to make a donation to the school for a general or specific purpose, e.g. school grounds projects, library fund or for new equipment. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible.

¹ Parent' in the policy has the same meaning as in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, which is: 'parent', in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

The attached diagram "**Understanding Parent Payment Categories**" provides examples of items and materials under each category.

In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following principles:

PRINCIPLES:

- **Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when schools determine their parent payments practices
- **Access, equity and inclusion:** All students have access to the standard curriculum program and participation of all students to the full school program is facilitated
- **Affordability:** Cost to parents is kept to a minimum and is affordable for most families at the school
- **Engagement and Support:** Early identification and engagement strategies by the school ensure parents are well informed of the payment options and supports available for those experiencing hardship
- **Respect and Confidentiality:** Parents and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement and the identity and personal information of all parents and students are kept confidential in respect to parent payments
- **Transparency and Accountability:** School parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by school councils

COST AND SUPPORT TO PARENTS

When school councils consider the proposed requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

School principals must ensure that:

- items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- payment requests are broadly itemised within the appropriate category
- parents are advised that they have the option of purchasing equivalent Essential Student Learning Items themselves, in consultation with the school
- information on payment options is available, accessible and easily understood to all parents so that they know what to expect and what supports they can access
- parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year). This enables parents to save and budget accordingly.
- parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year- ensuring parents have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought
- the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel
- parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next
- use of debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents is not permitted
- there will be only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential or optional items accepted by parents are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the school.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. Principals and school councils exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of

students and their families when considering parent payment fees. There are a range of support options available to support and assist parents. These can be accessed through ['Cost Support for Families'](#)

Consideration to hardship arrangements in respect to payment requests is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short term crisis on a confidential, case by case basis. All schools have written hardship arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty.

All parents are provided the name and contact details of a nominated parent payment contact person at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

In respect to each school's development of its parent payments, school councils will engage in effective communication with the school community and have strategies in place to ensure they are aware of and understand the needs and views of parents.

REVIEW OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Schools will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy at least annually as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community.

The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department's [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#)

Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see:

[Frequently asked questions for parents](#)

COBURG NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL, PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES INCLUDE:

Essential Student Learning Items Compulsory

These are items, activities or services that the school deems essential to student learning of the standard curriculum:

Items.....\$283

Items that the student takes possession of e.g. pens, paper, books, crayons, pencils, rulers and rubbers etc. These items are used in Mathematics, English, ICT, Health and PE, Project Based Learning, Science, Italian and The Arts.

Purchasing from a single supplier in bulk keeps the cost competitive. A 'Stationery Pack' will be ordered for each child unless you advise us that you will be sourcing your own stationery (full list available upon request from the Office). To further minimise costs (and packaging waste!), CNPS manages the distribution of bulk items directly to the classroom. Every effort is made to keep the number of items that need to be purchased to a minimum, and items are chosen carefully so that many can be utilised the following school year and beyond.

Activities.....\$27

- Life Skills Program Life Skills Program

The Mindfulness in Action Program teaches students to pay attention to their experiences in a non- reactive way. In a series of 6 interactive, progressive lessons students develop their self-awareness, increase impulse control, focus and empathy.

Total.....\$300 per student

Other Activities (TBA)

School or year level activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend e.g. optional camps, swimming, excursions and incursions
(Families will be advised on details and cost leading up to the time of the event.)

Optional Extras:

- Willis Ed Student School Insurance

Worldwide cover 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, against Injury (as defined by the policy) – which means any injury to the body of an insured person caused by an accident which occurs during the period of insurance and which results in any of the events specified in the policy, but does not include any condition which is also a sickness or disease.

Voluntary Contributions:

School Council invites a voluntary contribution from each student. This contribution will be used by School Council to provide:

- additional materials and services to improve the buildings and grounds additional computers and equipment
- additional programs to benefit students
- & support regular and transparent communication

Families will be informed throughout the year about School Council priorities for the expenditure of these funds. All voluntary contributions towards the facilities, supplies and services used by ALL students will play an integral role in the opportunities and outcomes for your child/ren.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Payments are kept to a minimum with payment requests and letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, two payment options have been developed:

Option A: Full amount

Option B: 2x Semester payments

Option C: Other payment arrangements

Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encourage to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

Receipts will be issued to the parents immediately upon making payment.

Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.

Only the initial invitation and one reminder notice for voluntary financial contributions will be issued to parents and guardians.

All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

We appreciate that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting payment requests.

A range of support options are available to parents who have difficulty making payments.

Families who do not have an immediate capacity to pay are also able to enter into alternative and confidential payment arrangements with the school.

Should you require information about financial assistance please contact our Principal, Helen Zull on 9354 1660.

Family support options

Eligible Families may access the following, for assistance in meeting financial commitments:

- *CSEF*
- *State Schools Relief*

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions before the end of the previous school year.

Payment requests or letter to parents will be itemised and the category each items fall under will be clearly identified as an essential education time, optional education time or voluntary financial contribution.

Parents with enquiries about or feedback on parent payments, are encouraged to contact the Principal, Helen Zull, on 9354 1660.

EVALUATION

It is the responsibility of School Council to monitor the implementation of this policy, identify the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents.

If changes are made to this policy, School Council will endeavour to inform all parents through the school's communication channels

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the school's regular review cycle.

- This policy was ratified by School Council in *November 2016*



Understanding Parent Payment Categories

Schools

What does the legislation say?

The Education and Training Reform Act (2006) provides for free instruction in the standard curriculum program to all students in government schools. The Act also empowers school councils to charge fees to parents for goods and services provided by the school to a child.

In the Act, a 'Parent' includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for a child including parental responsibility under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

What do schools pay for as part of 'free instruction'?



Free instruction is the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the standard curriculum program, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

The standard curriculum for Years F-10 means implementation of the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

The standard curriculum for senior secondary schools means a program that enables a student to be awarded a VCE or VCAL qualification.

What principles govern parent payment practice?

Educational Value | Access, Equity & Inclusion | Affordability

Engagement & Support | Respect & Confidentiality | Transparency & Accountability

Parents

What may parents be asked to pay for?

Schools can request payment for Essential Student Learning Items



These are items, activities or services that the school deems **essential** to student learning of the standard curriculum.

Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own.

These may also be either:

Items the student takes temporary or permanent possession of

- e.g.
- textbooks, activity books, exercise books
 - stationery, book bags
 - student ID cards, locks
 - cooking ingredients students will consume
 - materials for final products that students take home (technology projects, build-your-own kits, dioramas)
 - Picture Exchange Communication Systems

Activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend

i.e. travel, entry fees or accommodation

- e.g.
- excursions
 - incursions
 - school sports
 - work placements

Parents can be asked to pay for items, activities and services in the three Parent Payment Categories:

Essential Student Learning Items,
Optional Items and
Voluntary Financial Contributions.

Schools determine how items, activities and services are classified within these categories based on the learning and teaching program of their school.

Schools can request payment for Optional Items

These are items, activities or services that are **optional** and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum.

Students may access these on a user-pays basis.

These may be either:

Items the student purchases or hires

- e.g.
- school magazines, class photos
 - functions, formals, graduation dinners
 - materials for extra curricular programs
 - student accident insurance

Activities the student purchases

- e.g.
- fees for extra curricular programs or activities, such as instrumental music tuition
 - fees for guest speakers
 - camps, excursions, incursions, sports
 - entry fees for school run performances

Items and/or materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum

- e.g.
- use of silver in metal work instead of copper
 - supplementary exam revision guides

Support for families experiencing hardship is available at every school and each school has a parent payment contact person. See your school's policy for more information.

For more information on Parent Payments and Personal Devices, visit the DET website at: www.education.vic.gov.au

Schools can invite
Voluntary Financial Contributions
for



- e.g.
- Building or Library fund (Tax deductible)
 - Voluntary contributions for a specific purpose, such as equipment, materials, services.
 - General voluntary contributions