



# Parent Payment Policy

## Purpose:

School Councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories:

- Essential Education Items
- Optional Education Items
- Voluntary Financial Contributions.

All administrative and financial processes are compliant with Department of Education and Training (DET) requirements, including CASES21 financial reporting.

## Aims:

- To provide a broad range of high quality learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing limited government funds with approved financial contributions and payments from parents.
- To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

## Definition

'Parent' in this 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.

## Parent Payment Categories

There are three categories of parent payments.

### 1. Essential education items

Are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. These items can include:

- materials that the student takes possession of, including text books, student stationery, Wushka, Mathletics and Seesaw
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, ceramics, photography, catering); A compulsory Curriculum Resources Levy is charged by the school that includes bulk stationery items supplied to your child at school such as additional art supplies, photocopy paper, laminating, cover paper, cooking ingredients and shared classroom requisites.
- school uniform; and/or
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

*Wushka, Mathletics and Seesaw come with a range of resources for teachers, students and parents to access. The three programs are specifically designed so that teachers can communicate with parents and set lessons that are personalised to each student's needs. The programs can be used both at home and at school and will support students through the development of numeracy and literacy skills from Prep to Grade 6.*

## 2. Optional education items

These can also be referred to as non-essential materials and services. These items are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for each item. These items can include:

- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes
- school-based performances, productions and events
- excursions and incursions (including swimming)
- additional school items such as student/ class photographs.

## 3. Voluntary financial contributions

Are those items and services under which each family is invited to make a donation to the school. The school currently requests two voluntary contributions from parents annually on the booklist:

- Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Contribution
- Digital Technology Device Contribution.

## 4. Requests for Payment

- Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the academic year in which the materials and services are to be used
- Payment requests or letters to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution
- Upon making payment, receipts will be issued to parents within 5 school days
- 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 for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued to parents and guardians.

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

## Payment Support Options

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist parents, including:

- The **Camps, Sports and Excursion fund (CSEF)** supports families who met eligibility criteria set by the Victorian Government to ensure the student has the opportunity to participate in important, educational and fun activities
- The **State Schools Relief Committee** support, applications can be made via the Principal to assist with clothing/uniforms.

No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

## **Implementation:**

### **Student Requisites**

Bonbeach Primary School has spent considerable time selecting the most appropriate requisites to meet the needs of our students. Student requisites contain high quality materials at a competitive price due to our ability to bulk order.

Parents also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications provided by the school. There may also be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.

### **Uniforms**

- The uniform shop sources low cost suppliers to ensure the uniform is financially accessible
- In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education the School Council authorises the operation of a second-hand school uniform shop
- The Dress Code sets out the colours of the uniform items students are required to wear. Low cost generic uniforms with no school logo from suppliers such as Kmart, Target and Big W are acceptable as school uniform if the requirements of the Dress Code are met.

### **Payment arrangements and methods**

Parents will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

Payments may be made by cash, cheque or EFTPOS in person or via student at the office.

Direct deposit to the school **(Student name and Description must be provided)**.

### **Payment Options**

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

**Option A** - Full amount payment

**Option B** - Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal to discuss circumstances and available options.

### **Consideration of hardship**

The school will provide support to parents experiencing hardship, including:

- parents can communicate with by phone, email, in writing or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments to the Principal who is the nominated parent payment contact person
- parents/guardians who experience difficulties providing, or paying the school to provide, essential education items, should be encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal to discuss alternative payment methods
- early payment incentives, one off payments and payment plans. All payment plans must be finalised by the end of term 3.
- This policy will be communicated to the school community annually when the book lists are sent out
- The policy will also be prominently located on the school website
- The Principal is available for parents to discuss any issues, make general inquiries about charges and raise complaints.

### **Monitoring and review of the implementation of the policy**

- It is the responsibility of the School Council to monitor the implementation of the policy
- The factors/measures to be taken into account include transparency of processes and engagement

with parents

- The outcomes of any review of this policy will be reported back to the school community via the school website and newsletter.

**Evaluation:**

This policy is required to be reviewed annually by School Council to confirm/enhance internal control procedures.

**Approved by School Council on:** February 2024



# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## 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 parents 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## 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.

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.

## Communication with families

### 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](#)

## PARENT PAYMENTS POLICY

### ONE PAGE OVERVIEW



#### FREE INSTRUCTION

- Schools provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the requirements of the Curriculum. This includes the Victorian Curriculum F-10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) including the VCE Vocational Major and the Victorian Pathways Certificate.
- Schools may invite parents to make a financial contribution to support the school.



#### PARENT PAYMENT REQUESTS

Schools can request contributions from parents under three categories:

##### Curriculum Contributions

Voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum.

##### Other Contributions

Voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives.

##### Extra-Curricular Items and Activities

Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum. These are provided on a user-pays basis.

- Schools may also invite parents to supply or purchase educational items to use and own (e.g. textbooks, stationery, digital devices).



#### FINANCIAL HELP FOR FAMILIES

- Schools put in place financial hardship arrangements to support families who cannot pay for items or activities so that their child doesn't miss out.
- Schools have a nominated parent payment contact person(s) that parents can have a confidential discussion with regarding financial hardship arrangements.



#### SCHOOL PROCESSES

- Schools must obtain school council approval for their parent payment arrangements and publish all requests and communications for each year level on their school website for transparency.