



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.

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 judgment 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](#)

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



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

Mill Park Secondary College community shares a vision to build an education system that champions equity and excellence and ensures that every child and young person is supported to learn.

Underpinning each school's vision for excellence is a commitment that all Victorian students have access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstance, and that no-one is left behind. This enables an approach to educational achievement, engagement and wellbeing which draws on the best evidence and is responsive to local circumstances and need.

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Schools work in close partnership with parents and the broader school community to provide the best educational opportunities and outcomes for students both inside and outside the classroom. Through this partnership, parents understand that the contribution they make to their children's education, in all its various forms, has an important role in enriching the school's learning and teaching program and improving educational outcomes. The commitment from parents to contribute benefits students and results in improved achievement outcomes, wellbeing and engagement in learning. This is why parent contribution is highly valued by school communities.

Schools design and develop their learning and teaching programs drawing on the best educational knowledge and practices and strive to offer broad and enriched opportunities to students that are above and beyond what is required in the standard curriculum. Learning and teaching programs vary across schools to reflect the priorities, decisions and needs of each school and this, in turn, informs the fees set by school councils.

Schools are best placed to make decisions about their learning and teaching program and how to ensure there is equity and access to education for all students as well as a robust and comprehensive learning program that supports student aspirations. Schools are committed to creating positive, connected school communities and implementing good practices form part of this commitment. With regard to parent payments, this includes consideration of how parent payments are set, clearly communicating how decisions are made and recognizing that some families experiencing hardship may need additional consideration and support. Schools will establish clear expectations and provide supports that promote inclusion and strengthen partnerships with parents and the school community to continue improving student outcomes, wellbeing and engagement.

This policy is governed by the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act) which provides for free instruction in the standard curriculum program to all students in government schools.

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 program refers to the eight key learning areas – English, Mathematics, Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Arts, Languages, Health and Physical Education and Technologies, and four capability areas – Critical and Creative thinking, Intercultural, Ethical and Personal and Social.

Mill Park Secondary College School Council reviews parent payments requested annually. After considering the expectations of our wider community, School Council will continue to ensure that all requests are within the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Parent Payments in Victorian Government Schools Policy.

Schools can request payments from parents under three categories: Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items or Voluntary Financial Contributions.

Each school determines whether an item, activity or service is an Essential Student Learning Item or an Optional Item within the context of their distinct learning and teaching program. Good governance practice will ensure school councils consider and are able to communicate the rationale for the classification of items, activities or services, requested and charged according to the three categories.

Essential Student Learning Items

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

- Materials that the student takes possession of, such as text books and stationery
- Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. technology projects, workbooks, photography)
- School Uniform (where applicable)
- Activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend such as costs associated with excursions and work placements.

Note: If parents choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this must be done in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions for home economics) that, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

Optional Items

These are items or services that are optional and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students may access these on a user pays basis. These items include:

- Activities the student purchases (e.g. fees for extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum such as instrumental music tuition; fees for guest speakers; optional camps and excursions; entry fees to school-based performances, productions and events)
- Items the student purchases or hires (e.g. school magazines; class photos; formals/graduation functions; materials for extracurricular activities; student accident insurance)

Voluntary Financial Contributions

Parents, or anyone else, can be invited to make a voluntary contribution or donation to the school for the following purposes:

- Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers or student-related services. These contributions are NOT tax deductible.
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

School Council will consider the proposed requests for parent payments and contributions will be kept to a minimum and not exceed the cost of providing the relevant materials or services to our students.

- The school will not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.
- Items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed.
- Payment requests for goods, services and other items provided by the school to students are broadly itemized 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. This does not include activities set by the school.
- Schools must ensure information on payment options is available, accessible and easily understood by parents, ensuring parents know what to expect and what supports they can access.

- The status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel.
- Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees, that is, a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year. This enables parents to plan and budget accordingly.
- Schools must provide reasonable notice for any other payment request that arise during the school year, ensuring that parents have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought.
- Parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school payments from one year to the next.
- The use of debt collectors of any type to obtain any outstanding funds owed to the school from parents is not permitted.

A variety of payment options will be made available to parents including:

- Cash, Cheque or EFTPOS
- Credit Card facilities
- Direct Credit to the College (remitter name must be provided)
- BPay
- Centrepay – deduction from Centrelink payments.
- Payment Plan – confidential, individual plans can be arranged by contacting the College Business Manager on 03 9407 9700

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

At all times the Principal and School Council will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial, cultural or social circumstances of individual students and their families.

If necessary interpreting and translation services will be made available.

A range of support options are available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential student learning items:

- Camps, Sports & Excursion funding (CSEF) is available to eligible parents
- State Schools Relief support is available for uniforms, footwear, calculators and textbooks via the College Student Welfare Staff
- The College encourages and promotes the selling of second hand books, uniforms, equipment etc. through the websites www.sustainableschoolshop.com.au and www.atlaseducational.com.au
- Further local community support may be available. The College Student Welfare staff can provide information on these avenues.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The College will be proactive in dealing with hardship and will endeavor to identify families experiencing difficulty through teachers, Student Welfare Support and other appropriate strategies regularly used by the College.

Where families have difficulty making payments, the Principal, Campus Principal or Student Welfare Support Staff will encourage parents / carers to make an appointment to discuss with them the range of support options available and to negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement.

Parents can contact the following staff for assistance:

Student Welfare Support Staff Lalith Buddhadasa located at Middle Years Campus
Lukas Farfalla located at the Senior Campus

Business Manager Julie Wolfe

Telephone numbers: **MY Campus** 03 9407 9700 **Snr Campus** 03 9409 8222

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

A link to Parent Payment Policy and DET Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will be published on the College website. It will also be distributed to families each year with the annual payment request.

The Principal as Executive Officer of School Council, will ensure that the school-level policy complies with DET's policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to the policy.

The school will ensure that all communication with parents/carers, including payment requests, is fair and reasonable. Payment requests will be accompanied with a clear definition of the three payment categories and details of the materials and activities parents/carers are being asked to pay for.

General enquiries may be made to the College office on

MY Campus 03 9407 9700

Snr Campus 03 9409 8222

Related Documents

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

External Links www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pags/parentpayments.aspx

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The School Council (recommended by the Finance Committee) will conduct an annual review of the implementation of the Parent Payment Policy and will address any concerns raised by the College community. Any changes to the Policy Implementation will be reported to the community via the College website and reported in the College Newsletter.

Ratified Date: This policy was ratified by School Council on 30 October 2018

Review Date: This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's annual review cycle or if guidelines change.