

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Osborne Primary School

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

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.

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.

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 CHARGES

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program, and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding to schools for the standard curriculum program which includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the Australian Curriculum in Victoria Essential Learning Standards (AusVELS).

All students will have access to enrolment, the standard curriculum and receive instruction and services. An alternative option will be provided for students if their parents choose for them not to participate in an excursion, camp or in-school visit.

School Council requests payments from parents for student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions to support and enrich the schools learning and teaching program. These payments fall into three categories:

1. Essential Education Items:

Essential Education Items are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parent and guardians are responsible for;

- Materials that the individual student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery
- Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finalised articles for (e.g. ceramics, photography, catering)
- Essential services associated with, but not considered to be a part of, instruction in the standard curriculum program such as costs associated with camps, excursions and in-school visits which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport, food, accommodation and entrance costs)

2. Optional Extras

Optional Extras 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 and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- Instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program
- Extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program eg., instrumental music, band camp, ski camp
- School-based performances, productions and events
- Materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives
- Materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program
- School facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the standard curriculum Program

Students will not be considered for involvement in Optional Activities such as Band Camp, Ski Camp, Art Camp or Sailing if payment has not been received for a previous camp or Essential Education Items.

3. Voluntary Financial Contributions

Voluntary Financial Contributions which parents and guardians are invited to donate to the school.

This invitation for voluntary financial contributions may be for the following purposes:

- Contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund (these trust funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)
- Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school. This may include additional

- computers or student-related services
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Payment requests or letters to parents/guardians will identify which category the items fall into, i.e., essential education items and optional education items.

- Charges will be kept to a minimum and will not exceed the cost of the relevant materials or services provided to the student
- A minimum of six weeks' notice will be given for essential educational item payments to allow parents and guardians sufficient planning time
- Prepaid credit card form please note all payments will be processed immediately and credit card numbers, except for the last four digits, will be blacked out. No credit card details will be kept on file at the school.
- Parents can negotiate a payment plan with the principal, business manager or parent payment contact person.
- Payment of Student Supplies or camps may be made by predetermined installments.
- Voluntary financial contributions will be sought by initial invitation and only one reminder notice to parents will be issued
- Records of parent payments or contributions will be kept confidential
- Invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month.

Payment may be requested, but not required, prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

FAMILY 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.

- Second hand and low cost options e.g. second hand uniform clothing pool, low cost suppliers
- Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF)
- State Schools Relief
- Local community support services

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The school will provide a nominated parent payment contact person who can discuss payment arrangements with parents experiencing financial hardship:


- Parents can communicate discreetly with the Parent Payment Contact Person (Jennifer Waugh) by phone, email or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments.
- Information provided to families will include CSEF, State Schools Relief, special payment arrangements, and information on local community support organisations.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- A copy of the policy will be included with the new enrolment information packs, and with the annual Student Supplies Information Pack.
- Parents may make general inquiries and raise issues about charges by contacting the Business Manager or Principal via phone, email or in person.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- School Council will review the level and purpose of parent payments annually.
- This policy will be reviewed in line with DET requirements.

Approval Authority	
(Signature & Date)	School Council President: Date: 25th February 2021
Review Date	February 2022