



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

Rationale:

- The Education & Training Reform Act 2006 empowers school councils 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 and voluntary financial contributions, as well as to raise funds. As the quality and variety of educational programs offered by our school are enhanced by doing so, our School Council requests payment from parents for certain student materials and services charges, and for modest voluntary financial contributions.

Aims:

- To provide high quality learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing limited government funds with approved financial contributions and payments from parents.

Implementation:

- Only the most appropriate requisites will be selected to meet the educational need of the students.
- School Council supplements Department of Education funds by requesting payments from parents for the following items:-
 - **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 parents and guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. These items include:
 1. materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery;
 2. materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. art work, cooking activities or inquiry activities)
 3. school uniform;
 4. transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.
 - **Optional education items** (or non-essential materials and services) 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:
 1. student computer printing for personal use, internet access for recreational or non-school use;
 2. extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes, excursions, swimming program, interschool sport, incursions. **If payments have not been made before the date of the activity, the student concerned will not participate.**
 3. school-based performances, productions and events;
- In addition, School Council invites parents to make donations by means of:-
 1. **Voluntary financial contributions** are for those items and services that parents and guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, a library or building trust.
 2. **Other support options**

Camps Sports and Excursion Fund

A parent or guardian of a child under 16 years of age who holds an eligible Centrelink benefit and a Health Care Card or pension card, may be entitled to the Camps, Sports and Excursion Funds payment. Details of the entitlement are available from the school office
This payment goes directly to the school's account. It can be offset against any invoices for camps, sport or incursion/excursions.

Any portion of the CSEF not expended by the end of the year will be returned to the parent/guardian unless there is agreement reached with the parent/guardian that this money can be carried over into the next year.

Payment Arrangements

- Parents and Guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential educational items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year).
- Payments are kept to a minimum with payment requests and letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, payment options are available:
 - Option A Full amount
 - Option B Payment at the beginning of each Term
 - Option C Half yearly payment (beginning of Terms 1 & 3)
 - Option D Periodical payment arrangements upon consultation with the Office Manager.
- Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options. Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Payment requests or charges 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.
- Receipts will be issued to parents 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 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.
- Parents will receive a term planner and family statement in the first week of each new term detailing any excursions, incursions, camps or other special events with costs and payment due dates. These items fall under the optional education items classification, therefore if your child is participating payment will be required.
- The payments schedule will include itemised details relating to all payments, an option to purchase goods elsewhere (where appropriate), essential payment dates, options to make payments by instalments, clear definitions of the category of any payments (ie: Essential, Optional or Voluntary), an alignment between payment dates and the timing of EMA payments, and advice to parents to contact the principal if they require support or additional information.
- All costs and processes associated with parent payments and voluntary contributions will be reasonable, will be defensible in relation to Department of Education requirements, and will be within the expectations of the school community.

- 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 Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and State Schools Relief Committee support. As with all parent payments to the school, Council will provide opportunities for all parents experiencing financial difficulties to enter into alternative and confidential payment arrangements with the principal.
- No collectors of any type, including debt collectors, will be used to obtain funds from parents or students.
- Parents and guardians also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardians 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.
- No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.
- The principal will ensure that all staff are aware of this policy and adhere to it.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the five-year review cycle. In addition, School Council will review the level and purpose of parent payments and voluntary contributions annually, and in doing so will be consistent with any advice or instruction received from the Department of Education.