



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

To ensure school-level parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the Department of Education and Training (DET) policy requirements.

BACKGROUND

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program (i.e. key learning areas), and empowers the School Council to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

The Department provides funding to the school through the Student Resource Package (SRP) and various programs. This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs. Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the Victorian Curriculum.

GUIDELINES

- All students have access to the standard curriculum program.
- This policy covers the three parent payment categories (essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions).
- The school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.
- Items that students consume or take possession of are to be accurately costed.
- Cost is kept low;
- Payment requests must be clearly itemised within each category.
- Parents/guardians are given the option of purchasing equivalent essential education items themselves, in consultation with the school.
- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions. For example if parents/guardians choose for their children not to attend a compulsory excursion/camp, an alternative option will be provided.
- The status and details of any payments or non-payments are confidential.
- Parents are provided with early notice of payment requests with a minimum of three weeks' notice before due date of payment.
- Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
- Principals, as executive officers of the School Council, must ensure that the school-level policy complies with the DET's policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.

Important:

- It is not acceptable to coerce or harass parents/guardians to obtain payment.
- The Principal must ensure any payment records are kept confidential. The public identification of students or their parents/guardians who have or have not made a payment or financial contribution is unacceptable and must not occur in any circumstance.
- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by the school to obtain any funds from parents/guardians.

PARENT PAYMENT CATEGORIES

The following information describes the three parent payment categories that School Council may request payments from parents.

Essential Education Items

These are items which parents/guardians pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program and include:

- Materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and student stationary.
- Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. visual arts, science, catering).
- Activities associated with, but not part of instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps, incursions and excursions which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport and entrance costs).

Note: If parents/guardians choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this should 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) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

Optional Extras

These are items provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students. They are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents/guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- Extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music).
- School-based performances, productions and events.
- Year 6 Graduation and end-of-year activities;
- Interschool sport.

Voluntary Contributions

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

- Contributions to the building fund or contributions to the library fund (these funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible).
- 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
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

SCHOOL-LEVEL PROCESSES

Communication with Parents

All communication with parents/guardians, including payment requests, are to be fair and reasonable. Payment requests, letters or CASES21 invoices for student materials and services charges must be accompanied by the following information:

- A description of each of the three parent payment categories.
- That parents are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier, where appropriate.
- The availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the Principal if the parent wishes to discuss these.
- A copy of the school Parent Payments policy.

Administrative and Payment Processes

The school-level policy should ensure that:

- Administrative and financial processes are to be compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 financial reporting.
- 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.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice per year is sent to all parents/guardians.
- Receipts are issued to parents upon payment and receipted on CASES 21.

SUPPORT OPTIONS

A range of support options available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential items including:

- The Schoolkids Bonus which, as of November 2015, is provided by Centrelink to help with education costs and is automatically paid in January and July to eligible families and students.
- Access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the Principal to assist with clothing/uniforms.
- Welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with the school to provide further assistance to students and their families.

The Principal must exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The Principal is to make decisions about how to manage non-payment of essential education items or optional extras on a case-by-case basis. Where families have difficulty making payments, the Principal is expected to discuss with them the range of support options available, and to negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by instalments.

Parents/guardians who experience difficulties providing or paying the school to provide essential education items is encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal or other nominated senior staff member to discuss alternative payment methods.

RELATED LEGISLATION

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Sections 2.2.4. (1), 2.3.6 (1) (c), 2.2.

This policy will be reviewed in November 2017 or earlier if required

This policy was ratified by School Council in November 2015.