

Parent Payment Policy

Status: Review, August 2015
Finance Sub-Committee

Rationale:

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 and 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.
- To allocate funds, raised through parent payments, to curriculum resources.
- To allocate funds to ensure that the goals and targets identified in the strategic plan can be met.

Guidelines:

This policy ensures that:

- Instruction, incorporating teachers or tuition, in government schools, is free and cannot be charged for
- costs are kept to a minimum
- payment requests are clearly itemised under the three parent payment categories
- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- no student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution
- access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level will not be withheld as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.

Essential education items are those items or services that *are essential* to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents or guardians are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate.

These items include:

- materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. Visual Art)
- transport and entrances 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:

- student computer printing for personal use
- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes
- school-based performances, productions and events
- school magazines, class photographs.

Voluntary financial contributions are for those items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance.

Implementation:

- Parents will be advised of all costs associated with payments and voluntary contributions by November of the previous year, along with a recommended payments schedule.
- Payment Schedule:
 - ◇ Option A Full amount at the beginning of Term 1
 - ◇ Option B Six instalments. One in Term 4 required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used, and 5 monthly instalments from end of January.

POLICIES

- ◇ Option C Other payment arrangements - Alternative payment options are available through the school and parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.
 - Receipts will be issued to parents upon making payment.
 - Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional extras 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 per year to parents and guardians.
 - All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.
 - All payments and non-payments will be strictly confidential. The public identification of students or their parents where payments have or have not been received, will not occur.
 - 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.
 - 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. A range of support options are available to assist eligible parents, including the State Schools Relief Committee support.
 - Unpaid Essential Items payments **will not** result in any detriment by the school to the student or family.
 - Unpaid Optional Extras payments, camps, excursions etc, **may** compromise a student's ability to be involved in the optional activity.
 - Unpaid Voluntary Financial Contributions do not constitute a non-payment and will not result in any detriment by the school to the student or family.
 - No collectors of any type, including debt collectors, will be used to obtain funds from parents or students.
 - The principal will ensure that all staff are aware of this policy and adhere to it.
 - 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.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle. 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.

References:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/parentpayments.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/parentpaycatflow.pdf>