

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 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.

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.

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 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.

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- 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

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Understanding Parent Payment Categories

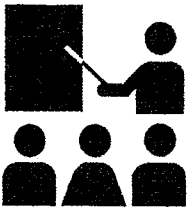
Schools

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.

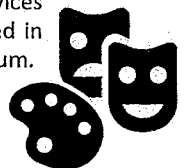
Schools determine how items, activities and services are classified within these categories based on the learning and teaching program of their school.

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

Schools can invite
Voluntary



- e.g.
- Building or Library fund (Tax deductible)



Parent Payment Policy

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Barwon Valley School requests payment from Parents/Carers under the following three categories only:

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. home economics, photography, catering)
- school magazine
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

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:

- student diaries

Other charges may apply during the year such as swimming, sailing, camps or special excursions. These activities are optional items and parental consent will be obtained.

Voluntary financial contributions: are for those items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school for Playground Development or BVS Fund.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (e.g. a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment requests/letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

Option A	Full amount at the beginning of Term 1
Option B	Part payment at the beginning of each Term
Option C	Half yearly payment (beginning of Terms 1 & 3)
Option D	Other payment arrangements

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Alternative payment options are available through the school and parents are encouraged to make an appointment with Noeline Burney (Business & Finance Leader) 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 to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional extra or voluntary financial contribution.





Receipts will be issued to parents immediately 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.

We have set up CentrePay to assist families on a Health Care or Pension card.

Payment Options	Explanation	How to set this up
CentrePay  centrelink	Centrelink will take payments out of your fortnightly benefit and give it to the school. This can be done as a one off or regular payments.	You can apply for Centrepay deductions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> on line at http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/centrepay; or by by completing a Centrepay deduction form (available from the school office)
Preferred Payment Method  Qkr! by MasterCard	The Qkr! app is for families of students at Barwon Valley School. Qkr! by MasterCard can be downloaded for free from Apple's app store for iPhones (iPads should download the iPhone app) or from Google Play for Android phones and tablets. This is a way to pay for canteen, school fees and excursions.	Qkr! Is a preferred payment method.
BPay 	Payment made directly to the school by using your BPay Biller Code and Reference No. This can be done as a once off or regularly.	Statements will be sent home each term (this contains your BPay codes). BPay is a preferred payment method.
Cash, cheque, EFTPOS or credit card 	Cash or cheques directly to the office. EFTPOS machine at the office.	Please do not send large amounts of cash in your child's bag. Credit card payments need to be processed at the office or complete the payment slip below. We do not take credit card payments over the phone.

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FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

Second hand uniforms may be available – all enquiries to the Wellbeing Officer

CSEF – provides payments for eligible students to attend camps or/and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply and a special consideration category also exists.

State Schools Relief may be available – all enquiries to the Wellbeing Officer

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Low income families, parents and children may be experiencing circumstances that prevent them from participating in school life. It is important that every support is provided to ensure all can access and participate in learning experiences at school. Barwon Valley School will provide support to parents/carers experiencing hardship, including:

- Barwon Valley School has a nominated parent payment contact person (Noeline Burney, Business & Finance Leader) who parents can communicate with by phone, email or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments.
- Noeline is available to meet, communicate through email or discuss over the phone any family financial difficulty or circumstance.
- Parents/Carers are encouraged to contact the school to have a discussion with Noeline in which information of support available will be provided. The Business & Finance Leader will use discretion and negotiate appropriate forms of payment assistance.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

This policy and the school's implementation will be communicated with the school community through advertising prominently on the school website, including payment information and ensuring hard copies are available in the office foyer.

Parents/Carers have the opportunity to make general inquiries about charges at the general office between the hours of 9.00 am until 4.00 pm. Any issues can be raised via phone, email or by making a time to meet with the Business & Finance Leader, Noeline Burney.

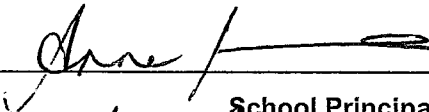
MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY


As part of the DET's and Barwon Valley School's commitment to ongoing improvement and ensuring that the impact of policies and practices on students are assessed in an ongoing way, implementation of the Parent Payment Policy and school practice will be reviewed at least annually.

School Council have a key role in ensuring the school level approach to parent payments reflects the shared expectations of the whole school community and is therefore responsible of monitoring effectiveness and the impact on parents/carers and students. The factors/measures that will be taken into account are the; transparency of processes and engagement with parents. The DET Transparency Framework will be used which assists in the implementation and compliance with the policy. The framework includes a Transparency Checklist Tool that enables self-assessment of open and transparent processes and practices. This tool is to be used to provide a good practice framework upon which policy implementation can be regularly reviewed and reported on.

This policy was ratified by School Council on

Date: 29 / 10 / 2019

Signed: 
School Principal

Signed: 
School Council President

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