

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Newborough 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

Newborough Primary School

Parent Payment Policy

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

This policy covers payments for essential education items, optional extras, incursions/excursions and voluntary financial contributions the school may request, and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests may be made.

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum programs, and empowers the School Council 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 programs. The standard curriculum programs include core learning and teaching activities associated with the Australian Curriculum in Victoria (AusVELS). The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding to schools 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 which are an integral part of the SRP. The School Council has the responsibility to develop policy and plans to allocate their overall resources – human, financial and physical – in accordance with the goals, targets and strategies outlined in their strategic plan. This includes the allocation of funding provided under the SRP, any other funding provided by DET and locally-raised funds.

Categories of Parent Payments

The School Council will request payments from parents for student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories:

- **Essential Education Items** which parents and guardians are required to provide or pay the school to provide for their child (e.g. stationery, text books and school uniforms where required)

Essential education items are those items used in the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents/guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. These items include:

- 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 (e.g. home economics, 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 and excursions which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport and entrance costs).

School uniform (where applicable)

- **Optional Extras** which are offered on a user-pays basis and which parents/guardians may choose whether their child accesses or participates in (e.g. school magazines, extra-curricular programs or activities)

Optional extras (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/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 (e.g. student computer printing for personal use, internet access for recreational or non-school use, and religious education materials)
 - extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music tuition)
 - 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 which may be more desirable (e.g. the use of more expensive materials)
 - materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school magazines)
 - school facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).
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- **Voluntary Financial Contributions** which parents and guardians may be invited to donate to the school (e.g. grounds beautification, additional computers).

The School Council will invite parents/guardians of students enrolled at the school, or anyone else, to make a donation in the form of a **voluntary financial contribution** to the school for the following purposes:

- contributions for a specific purpose as 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

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

The policy will ensure that:

- students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions
- all students have access to the standard curriculum program
- parents/guardians are provided with an alternative option for their children if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp
- 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 is sent to all parents and guardians
- under no circumstances will collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by the school to obtain any funds from parents and guardians.

The Principal will ensure any record of payments or contributions by parents and guardians is kept confidential. The public identification of students or their parents and guardians who have or have not made a payment or financial contribution is unacceptable and will not occur in any circumstances.

REFUNDS

Our school will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally we will not be able to refund payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The Principal will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The Principal will 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 will discuss the range of support options available, and will negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by instalments.

Families will also have access to the following when required:

- *Second hand uniform donated to the school*
- *CSEF (Camps, Sports Excursion Fund)*
- *State Schools Relief Program*

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The principal, Christine Robinson, can be contacted if families are experiencing financial hardship. This communication can be by phone, email or in person to discuss their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments.

- It is the responsibility of the Parent/Carer to provide as much relevant information as possible so an informed decision can be made by the principal and the appropriate assistance or payment arrangements put in place.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Communication with Parents

All communication with parents about education items, including requests for payment, is fair and reasonable. Payment requests, letters or CASES 21 invoices for student materials and services charges will be accompanied by the following information:

- parent/guardians are required to provide essential education items for their students, and they 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 or business manager if the parent wishes to discuss these
- details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the school .

Payment requests or letters to parents will clearly identify which category the items fall into, i.e. essential education items, optional education items, excursions/incursions or voluntary financial contributions. Only one request for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued. Parents/guardians will not be coerced or harassed to obtain payment.

- Parents/Carers can contact the school by phone, email or in person raise any issues and make general inquiries. If a parent/carer has a complaint it must be discussed with the principal, Christine Robinson via phone, email or in person.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and administration of the policy and will ensure that it is communicated within the school and that all staff is familiar with and adhere to it. The policy on essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions will:

- provide parents/guardians with early notice of requests for payment of essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions. A minimum of six weeks' notice will be given to allow parents and guardians sufficient planning time. Payment will be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment of essential education items, optional extras or voluntary financial contributions.
- ensure that the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents/guardians are confidential.

Date of approval by School Council October 21st 2019 and is scheduled to be reviewed October 2020.