



PARENT PAYMENTS POLICY

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1. Introduction

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.

2. Context

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.

3. 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)
- **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)
- **Voluntary Financial Contributions** which parents and guardians may be invited to donate to the school (e.g. grounds beautification, additional computers).

4. School Policy

This policy covers essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions and will meet the community's expectations and be available to parents and guardians upon request. The policy will keep parent payments to a minimum and will not exceed the cost of the relevant materials or services to the student. The Principal, as

executive officer of school council, will ensure that the policy complies with the requirements of this DET policy.

5. Implementation and Administration

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.

6. 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.

7. Essential Education Items and Optional Extras

The School Council will request payments for two types of essential education items or optional extras used in the course of instruction, as detailed below. Parents/guardians will be given the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents/guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this must be done in consultation with the school, and items must meet the specifications provided by the school. If the School Council is uncertain as to whether parents/guardians can reasonably be expected to pay for education items or services, advice will be sought from the DET Gippsland regional office.

Essential Education Items 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

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).

8. Voluntary Financial Contributions

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

9. Support Options

- Access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the principal to assist with clothing/uniforms.

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.

Financial Hardship

Families can suffer financial hardship for a number of reasons and the effects can be short or long term.

Parents or Carers who are experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to contact the school for a confidential discussion as soon as possible

Newborough Primary Financial Hardship Contact

Tim Delany Ph: 5127 1448

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 school's financial hardship contact and the appropriate assistance or payment arrangements put in place.

10. Payment Arrangements and Non-Payment

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.

11. Further DET Information and Resources

The regional office can provide additional advice to the School Council and Principal as required. Additional information and support is also available from the following websites:

- further information and support for the school and School Council regarding the implementation of this policy is available at:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx>
- the school council is encouraged to access the support materials available at:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/schoolcouncils/default.htm>
- support regarding school-based communication is available at:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/communications.aspx>

guidelines for parent/guardian complaints processes are available at:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx>

This policy was approved by School Council

FEBRUARY 2017