



# MOORoopNA SECONDARY COLLEGE

## PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

### 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 parents<sup>1</sup> 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**

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.

<sup>1</sup> Parent<sup>1</sup> 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.

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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 itemized 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.

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## PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

- Mooroopna Secondary College School Council will annually review parent payment requests to ensure they are in line with Department of Education & Training guidelines. Charges will be clearly itemized, costed and categorized as Essential Education Items, Optional Items or Voluntary Contributions.
- Parent contribution requests will be made in line with the principles of educational value, access, equity and inclusion, affordability, engagement and support, respect and confidentiality, transparency and accountability.
- Parent contributions will be requested to assist the college in providing an enhanced teaching and learning program for every student in line with the college's priorities.

## PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

- Parents will be provided with early notification of annual payment requests (a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year). Reasonable notice will be given for any other payment requests during the year (i.e. excursions, camps).
- Parents will be permitted to make payments in instalments and be provided with several methods of payment, such as EFT, BPAY, cash, cheque or Centrepay. Parents are able to enter into confidential payment plan arrangements by contacting the college Business Manager, Jo Landy on 03 5825 2344.

## FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

- The [Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund \(CSEF\)](#) provides a payment of \$225 per annum for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply. A Special Consideration eligibility category also exists.
- The [CSEF Year 7 Uniform Package](#) provides a basic uniform pack through State Schools' relief (SSR) for Year 7 students who are in receipt of the CSEF payment. Uniform includes shoes, jumper, pants or shorts & shirt, or dress.
- [State Schools' Relief](#) may cover the cost of new school uniforms, school shoes and other items for disadvantaged students. State Schools' Relief only responds to requests from school Principals, Business Managers or Wellbeing Coordinators. Parents or carers who are experiencing financial hardship need to make an appointment with the school to discuss their situation.
- [Student Scholarships](#) are generally awarded on the basis of academic achievement, participation in the school and local community, or financial need, but are not limited to these.
- [Student Discretionary Fund](#) provides financial support for Year 12 students who are experiencing financial hardship, and have the ability and intention to engage in further tertiary studies. Applications are made by contacting the college Business Manager or the Wellbeing Coordinator.
- [Ganbina](#) works with and provides scholarships for our indigenous students. This service engages with young people from an early age while they are still at school and help them to make the most of their full educational opportunities.
- [Community Support](#)  
Access to various forms of assistance and support is provided by local businesses, members of the college community, local support agencies and services. Some of which include The Smith Family, Villamaria, St. Vincent de Paul, Kiwanis, Rotary & Lions Clubs, Turaton, and may be accessed by referral through the college Wellbeing Coordinator.

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- Saver Plus is an initiative of Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ, delivered locally by community organizations in 22 locations in Victoria. Saver Plus assists individuals and families on lower incomes to have every dollar up to \$500 saved over a 10-month period matched by ANZ to go towards education-related costs.
- Second Hand Books - The college provides facilities for students to advertise second hand books available for sale.
- Second Hand Uniforms - A limited supply of second hand uniforms is available for purchase from the college.
- College Breakfast Club - operates before school and provides a selection of breakfast foods and beverages free to students. MSC Breakfast Club is supported by donations from Red Cross and the local Kiwanis Club.
- Educational Items

The school seeks suppliers of educational items who provide not only competitive prices, but also quality of product and service.

### CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

- The college understands that families may experience financial difficulties or hardship at times and may be unable to meet full or part payments requested. Families are invited to contact the Business Manager to enter into a confidential Payment Plan.
- A confidential counselling and support service is available at the college to all families including those experiencing financial hardship. Families and students are encouraged to contact the College Wellbeing Coordinator, Aileen Watson on 03 5825 2344 to discuss the assistance required.
- The College staff is encouraged to identify disengaged families and students and/or those who may be experiencing financial hardship. In order to assure appropriate support for families in need, staff follow an established referral process to the college Wellbeing Coordinator.

### COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- The Parent Payment Policy will be published in the college Newsletter, the college website, Facebook, Compass and will also be distributed to families each year along with the annual payment request.
- General enquiries regarding parent charges may be made by phoning the college Finance Office on 03 5825 2344. Concerns should be directed to the Principal, Stephen Bolton.

### MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- The College Council (via the Finance Sub Committee) will conduct an annual review of the implementation of the Parent Payment Policy taking into account that the policy is compliant with Department of Education & Training guidelines, college teaching and learning priorities, and addressing any feedback or concerns raised by the school community. Any changes to the Policy implementation will be reported back to the school community via the college Newsletter and links on the college website, Facebook and Compass.

**Date Ratified by School Council:** 17 / 10 / 2018

**Next Review Due:** 17 / 10 / 2019

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