

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

**School Name: RANGEVIEW 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 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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](http://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

RANGEVIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL  
**Parent Payment Policy**  
RANGEVIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL  
**Parent Payment Policy**

## **PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES**

While the State Government supplies a proportion of the school's income it is not sufficient to provide the high quality, enriching programs that Rangeview Primary School (RPS) offers and that the community has endorsed and embraced over many years. We are very proud of our quality programs which cater for the needs and interests of all students. School Council will endeavor to provide resources for enriching educational programs, administration, facilities and maintenance, giving careful consideration to costs incurred by parents.

### ***Essential Student Learning Items***

The **Essential Student Learning Items** include student consumable requisites and curriculum costs which support the overall core curriculum costs which sustain the curriculum. Through prudent financial management and responsible fee increases, the School continues to ensure that quality teaching facilities are maintained and the high quality programs and standards that we have come to expect at RPS are continued.

- **Essential student learning items include** materials that the individual student takes possession of, including, but not limited to – booklists, text books, student bulk stationery, art supplies, music supplies, LOTE supplies, ICT costs and shared consumable materials. Individual Student registration of specific student learning applications eg: Mathletics, Spellodrome, Reading Eggs etc. and more. Please see Appendix A for individual costings of these essential items which are reviewed annually during the budget process.
- **Essential student learning items include** Excursions and Incursions are activities that Rangeview Primary School deem essential to student learning of the standard curriculum and therefore expect all students to attend. For each school excursion/incursion, parents will be given details of the activity via Sentral. Students cannot leave the school on an excursion without written parental permission and excursion levy paid. All monies paid as an excursion/incursion levy will only be used for this purpose.
- What if my child is absent for the incursion/excursion?
  - Upon request, the entry cost associated with any excursion is fully refundable
  - Bus travel costs are based on total numbers rather than individual costs and may not always be refundable
  - Families travelling for extended times, such as a full school term, when notified and requested in advance, will be repaid in full for missed excursions
  - For children who are absent due to extended sickness a full reimbursement will be made upon request. A doctor's certificate will need to be provided.

### ***Optional Items***

**Optional Items** are items or services that are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students may access these on a user pays basis and may include:

- Activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum eg: instrumental music tuition, chess
- Camps , competitions and additional sporting activities eg district sporting competition, interschool sports
- Instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program, camps and excursions, school-based performances, productions and events

Essential Student Learning Items are to be paid in full or by alternative arrangements before student participation in optional activities.

### ***Voluntary Financial Contributions***

Schools may invite parents and guardians to make a donation in the form of a **voluntary financial contribution** to the school. These may include:

- Tax Deductible contributions to the Building Fund
- Tax Deductible contributions to the Library Development Fund
- Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school

At Rangeview Primary School the following voluntary contributions requested per family are specified on the Parent Payment request to families:

- First Aid Fund - Following a comprehensive survey in 2014 Rangeview Primary School Council and the Parent Community overwhelmingly endorsed the provision of a First Aid Officer and the First Aid Fund ensures onsite quality care for our children.
- Library Development Fund - endorsed by the Australian Tax Office (ATO) as Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)
- Building Fund - endorsed by the Australian Tax Office (ATO) as Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)

## **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.

Families may elect to pay the total of the annual Family Payment request:

- In full

**OR**

- An initial payment of \$160 of the Essential Learning items cost on/or before collection of books, and the remaining balance of the Total annual Family amount in 2 equal instalments.
- Alternative payment arrangements to the above can only be arranged through the Parent Payment Contact Person(s).

Payment can be made BPay, Eftpos/Credit Card (Visa or Mastercard), cash or cheque.

Rangeview Primary School cannot accept Diners Card or American Express.

## **FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS**

Information regarding support options is available from the general office.

- Second hand uniform(s) if available
- Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF) to eligible families
- State Schools Relief
- Local community supports eg: Anglicare
- Local Government supports
- Commonwealth Government supports

## **CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP**

At Rangeview Primary School we have a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents/guardians who may be experiencing either short or long term financial hardship and who are unable to make the requested payments. A parent payment contact person(s) will be nominated on all Parent Payment communications to ensure Parents/Guardians have a contact that will confidentially address hardship needs with sensitivity, respect and understanding. Parents/Guardians can communicate by phone, email or meet in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments.

Parent Payment Contact Person(s):

Liz Barr	Principal	9874 6381	<a href="mailto:rangeview.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au">rangeview.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au</a>
Colleen Stavrakis	Business Manager	9874 6381	<a href="mailto:rangeview.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au">rangeview.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au</a>

The parent payment contact person(s) is able to use discretion to agree on an appropriate form of support and assistance. These options may include but are not limited to:

- Waiving or reducing fees
- Deferred payment and/or extension of payment due dates
- Alternative instalment plans enabling nomination of a schedule that is affordable
- Cost saving options eg: Second hand uniforms, loaned school items, resources etc.
- Referral to Government, Community and Commonwealth Assistance Programs  
eg: Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF), State Schools' Relief, Child Care Benefit

## **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

The Parent Payment Policy and its Implementation will be published on the School Website and communicated through the School newsletter along with a link on the Parent Payment annual request documentation.

General enquiries regarding parent payments may be directed to the School Office on 9874 6381 and if there are any concerns an appointment should be made with the Business Manager and/or Principal.

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

The School Council (via the Finance Committee) has the responsibility to annually review and monitor the implementation of the Parent Payment Policy.

This review will include:

- student learning opportunities and outcomes
- transparency of processes
- hardship arrangements
- community affordability
- engagement and understanding from parents
- feedback and communication to/from the community
- compliance with DET guidelines and legislation
- equality and confidentiality

This review will be conducted no later than October annually. Distribution of the Parent Payment requests for the following year will be a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the end of the current school year. Any amendments or alterations to the policy will be reported back to the community via the school website and newsletter.

**Date of approval by School Council**

**Wednesday 23rd October, 2019**