

# PARENT PAYMENTS

## 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.

In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following principles:

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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.

## 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**

# **MURRUMBEENA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **Parent Payments 2017**

### **PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES**

- **ESSENTIAL EDUCATION ITEMS OR SERVICES** (e.g. stationery, text books, consumables, school uniform, swimming and excursions)
- **VOLUNTARY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS** (e.g. grounds, building trust, library trusts).
- **OPTIONAL EXTRAS** which are offered on a user-pays basis and which parents may choose whether their child accesses or participates in (e.g. extra curricular programs, school magazines, class photos)

### **ESSENTIAL EDUCATION ITEMS**

#### **STUDENT REQUISITES \$160**

The student requisites levy of \$160 is payable by parents and covers the expendable materials used by students (student requisites, stationery, art materials, computer consumables, printing etc.). For 2017, the requisite charge has been increased to cover costs of the school's writing priority, with designated writing books and markers being purchased to support this strategy. Many other schools provide a stationery and equipment list for children to purchase, however our school prefers that all children have access to the same materials at the beginning of each school year, or as necessary during the year. These costs cover all essential materials, and have been set at the minimum possible rate.

#### **STEPHANIE ALEXANDER KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM (YEARS 3 AND 4 ONLY)**

The SAKG program involves Year 3 and 4 students and includes developing the garden, and cooking a healthy meal in the kitchen, based on seasonal ingredients. On kitchen days, there is no need for students to bring lunch, as the meal prepared will comprise 3 to 5 food selections. We need to charge a fee for the kitchen classes to cover the cost of food. School Council has resolved that the most appropriate way to ensure sustainability of this excellent program is to levy \$9 per child per kitchen session in 2017.

#### **SWIMMING \$38**

The School offers a first class swimming program, onsite, with fully qualified instructors. However to cover these costs it is necessary to charge a compulsory entry fee, which is \$38.00 per child, and it must be made before the commencement of the swimming program.

#### **EXCURSIONS AND IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMS / PERFORMANCES \$135**

There is a bulk charge of \$135 per year to cover the cost of transport and entrance fees for school excursions and visiting performances. You are able to pay this amount as a bulk payment, or it can be split for each term. If your child is absent for an excursion, the cost of that excursion will be refunded on request. Details of each excursion and incursion will be distributed during the year, and will link to the units of inquiry being studied at each level.

### **VOLUNTARY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS (TAX DEDUCTIBLE)**

In considering its funding options, School Council uses tax deductible voluntary funds to assist the school and parents in meeting the increased financial needs of the school. **These fees are tax deductible and receipts will be issued.**

#### **Library \$30**

The \$30 fee goes towards replenishing and expanding our library resources.

#### **Building Maintenance \$30**

The \$30 fee for the Building Maintenance Fund goes towards maintaining our grounds.

**Library – Technology \$70**

This \$70 contribution will be receipted through the Library Trust Fund and is used to support and extend our technology resources in the library.

**Building Fund \$170 lump sum**

A **family** levy of \$170.00 or \$30.00 per year for seven years (\$210.00) is charged for contribution to maintenance and upkeep of our buildings (e.g. air conditioning; maintenance of hall which was originally funded by the community). Once the levy has been paid by a family, there will be no further charge for any subsequent child of that family entering the school.

## PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Payments may be made in full, or by termly installments (see below)

	Full Payment	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Student Requisites ( <i>Essential</i> )	\$160.00				
Swimming Levy ( <i>Essential</i> )	\$38.00				
Excursion Levy ( <i>Essential</i> )	\$135.00				
Library Fund ( <i>Voluntary &amp; Tax Deductible</i> )	\$30.00				
Building Maintenance Fund ( <i>Voluntary &amp; Tax Deductible</i> )	\$30.00				
Library Fund – Technology donation ( <i>Voluntary &amp; Tax Deductible</i> )	\$70.00				
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$463.00				
<b>Years 3 and 4 only (<i>Essential</i>)</b>					
Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program (\$9 per week)	\$288.00				
<b>TOTAL (Years 3 and 4 only)</b>	\$751.00				
<b>Years 5 and 6 only</b>					
Camp	TBA				
Interschool Sports – various events (eg. Summer approx. \$75)	TBA				

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## METHODS OF PAYMENT

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## FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

- Second hand options are available at the school
- CSEF (Camps, Sport and Excursions Fund) – contact the office for eligibility
- State Schools Relief – contact the office for eligibility

## CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

- Contact the principal or assistant principal if experiencing financial hardship.

## COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- The Parent Payment policy is distributed in hard copy to all families at the beginning of the school year. Information is also available via the school website. Questions or concerns relating to the Parent Payment policy should be directed to the principal.

## MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- School council reviews the policy on an annual basis, following feedback from teachers, parents and the finance sub-committee. Increases in parent payments, where applicable, are endorsed by council prior to the approval of the school budget. Parents are informed of payment increases following the school council meeting where the increase was endorsed.

**Date of approval by School Council**

17 October 2016

# 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