



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Dimboola Memorial Secondary College

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

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.

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.

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

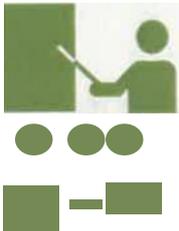
Schools

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



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

- Novels and textbooks in all subjects - Years 7-10. Extensive curriculum materials/resources for English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities.
- Stationery - subject dependent - coloured paper, card, art supplies, student ID cards as requested.
- All cooking ingredients for Food Technology classes and other subjects where food preparation may occur.
- Materials for final products that students take home - woodwork, 3D printing, metalwork, visual communication and design.
- One to one laptop program. All curriculum areas require students to use computers for various aspects of their school work. Parents contribute approximately 80% of the total cost of the device, with the school contributing the additional 20%.
- articulate how payment requests support/enrich the school's learning/teaching program

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

- Families will receive their invoice for payments in February and payment will be requested prior to the end of Term One.
- A reminder invoice will be sent at the end of Term Two, with payment requested at the end of Week Three, Term Three.
- Payments can be made via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), Bank transfer using the school's BSB and Account No., BPay, or cash - paid at the General Office .
- Families may arrange a payment plan and should speak with the DMSC, Business Manager or Principal to put a plan in place. The school support CentrePay for families who wish to utilise this service.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

- Some second hand uniform items are available to purchase through the office
- CSEF - available to families with a current Health Care Card. (application form available at the office.)
- State Schools Relief - applications can be lodged on behalf of eligible families through the office. Please contact the school.
- Breakfast Club available to all students and lunch available to eligible students . Contact the school to discuss eligibility .

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

- The school will be mindful to not overburden families who are experiencing hardship and will proactively reach out to families who are known to be in need. This will be managed discreetly by the Business Manager and Principal.
- If parents/carers are experiencing hardship, they should speak with DMSC Business Manager, Mrs Kaye Webb. Kaye can be contacted on 5389 1460 or emailed :
webb.kaye.l@edumail.vic.gov.au
- In the first instance, please contact the school via phone 5389 1460, and speak with Kaye Webb. Arrangements can then be made for a face-to-face meeting, or the discussion can take place over the phone.
- If parents/carers would prefer to speak with the Principal, an appointment can be made by contacting the office on 5389 1460.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- The DMSC Parent Payment Policy is available on the school's website.
<http://www.dmsc.vic.edu.au/>
- If parents or carers have any concerns or questions regarding the payments requested, they should make contact with the school at their earliest convenience. Their enquiry should be directed to the Business Manager or Principal.
- If parents or carers are unhappy with the charges or the processes surrounding parent payments, they may make a complaint by following the procedures in the DMSC Complaints Policy. This policy is also readily available on the school's website, or a copy can be provided by the DMSC General Office.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- The DMSC School Council will review and endorse the Parent Payment Policy annually. Due consideration will be given to any changing circumstances impacting the families who attend DMSC. These include: drought, floods and fire. (And any other event that may adversely impact on the capacity of families to pay their children's school fees.)
- All families will be given timely notice about when payments are due and those in need, will be supported to implement a payment plan.
- The DMSC School Council, Finance Sub-Committee will receive termly (four times per year) updates on the percentage of payments received and will work with the Principal and Business Manager regarding any additional supports or initiatives that may need to be implemented. This will be reported back to the whole School Council.
- The reviewed policy will be available on the DMSC website immediately after it is endorsed by School Council.

Date of approval by School Council: February 2021 to be reviewed in February 2022.