



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Note: the first four pages of this document are the Department's standard policy and, as at September 2018, it was not permitted to be customised. The school council will review this requirement and the standard policy annually to ensure it is aware of any changes.

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. 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

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.



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- **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
 - camp, 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



MACEDON PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION (For community consultation in September 2018)

1. PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Schools can only request payments from parents under three categories: Essential Student Learning Items, Voluntary Financial Contributions or Optional Items.

At Macedon Primary School, parents are requested to make the following payments:

(a) **Essential Student Learning Items**—this payment has three components:

- Books and Stationery. This covers all necessary books and stationery including workbooks, papers, pastes, writing and drawing implements, display books, folders, classroom scissors.
- Subject Contributions. This covers equipment and consumable materials for specialist programs including The Arts (Visual and Performing), Indonesian, Science and Physical Education.
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Levy. This covers the cost of ICT consumables, including printer cartridges and subscriptions to online educational websites and applications.

(b) **Voluntary Financial Contribution** – this payment is optional and is usually sought for a specific purpose which is identified for parents. For example, in 2017, the payment was sought for “*Asphalt repairs and new line marking for basketball/netball court*”. It is up to individual families as to whether they wish to make this voluntary contribution.

(c) **Additional Optional Items** – this payment is optional and is payable for a specific item. In 2017, the item was “*A full colour copy of the traditional Macedon Mirror magazine at the end of the year*”.

The school receives a specific amount of funding from the government based on how many students are enrolled at the school. The parent payments boost the school’s resources which allows improvements to the school’s facilities and delivery of additional learning opportunities for students. The specific amount of the parent payments sought in 2017 are set out in the Schedule to this Policy.

2. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions.

The school is flexible about the timing of the annual parent payments and currently asks parents to nominate one of the following three payment options:

- Option A: Full amount paid early Term 2;
- Option B: Payment each term (total divided by 4);
- Option C: Other payment arrangements. If selecting this option, parents are asked to contact the school office discuss available options.

Parent payments can currently be made by Cash, Cheque or Bpay. As at mid 2018, the school was investigating whether future parent payments can be made through the Qkr App. The Qkr App is currently available to order and purchase school uniform. Please contact the front office if you are interested in this option.

Other fees payable during the year – eg camps, excursions etc

Parents may request to pay any other fees which arise throughout the year by instalments. Any such request should be made through the classroom teacher or the Principal.

Parents and guardians will be given an alternative option for their children if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp.

3. FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

Macedon Primary School has a range of options available to support families.

Uniform Shop

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education, second-hand uniform items are sold by the PFA from time to time. The PFA must ensure that the prices of the second-hand uniform items are kept suitably low. The Uniform Shop is open at specific times during the week and these are advertised in the school newsletter.

Other Support Options

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist eligible parents, including the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund and the State Schools Relief Committee.

Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund

This is a fund provided by the State Government and is available to assist eligible families with the cost of camps, sport events or excursions and incursions. In order to be eligible, families must hold a health care card and must register during either Term 1 or Term 2 of each year. Any payments received go directly to the school and are tied to the student. Eligible families are requested to contact the school at the beginning of the year to register for this fund.

State Schools Relief (SSR) Program

This is an independent organisation that provides assistance in relation to school uniform and footwear to school families who are experiencing hardship. If you are struggling to provide your child's uniform and footwear for school, please make an appointment with the Principal to discuss your situation. Assistance may be available through the SSR Program.

You may be eligible for SSR assistance in the following circumstances:

- Health issues resulting in serious financial difficulties
- Unemployment
- House fires
- Bereavement
- Family violence
- Illness
- Independent living / homelessness
- Natural disasters
- Serious financial difficulty.

SSR only responds to requests from Principals or representatives of the school, so it is important that families contact the Principal to discuss.

4. CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The school takes a proactive approach to engage with parents disconnected from the school who may be experiencing hardship. For example, the Principal will discretely approach families who may need support and special payment arrangements.

The school will not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment. Students will not be treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education

items, services of voluntary financial contributions. The school will ensure that the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents/guardians are confidential.

Any family experiencing hardship is asked to contact the Principal about their financial situation and related payment difficulties and can do so by phone (03) 5426 1518, email (forrest.matthew.j@edumail.vic.gov.au) or in person.

5. COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

This policy will be released for community consultation before it is finalised and approved by the school council. This is the school's standard practice for all new policies issued or updated by the school.

The community consultation process gives a random selection of parents the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft policy. All feedback is considered by the school council before it approves the policy.

Once the policy has received community consultation and been approved by school council, a notice is published in the next newsletter to that effect and the policy is then published on the school's website so that it is publicly available at all times.

If any parent has any queries or concerns in relation to this policy, they are invited to contact the Principal by phone, email or in person.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

It is the responsibility of the school council to monitor implementation and review of the policy. The policy will be reviewed annually and in accordance with the school's Policy Review Policy.

Date of approval by School Council:

Date of next review:

SCHEDULE: PARENT PAYMENTS FOR 2018

Essential Student Learning Items

Item	Details	Amount
Books and Stationery	Each student has access to a range of materials and requisites to use in their classrooms: workbooks, a range of papers, pastes, writing and drawing implements, display books, folders, classroom scissors, etc.	\$ 70.00
Subject Contributions	Class sets and consumable materials for specialist programs including The Arts (Visual and Performing), Indonesian, Science and PE.	\$ 50.00
ICT Levy	Contributes to the cost of ICT consumables, including printer cartridges and subscriptions to online educational websites and applications.	\$ 40.00
Total per student		\$160.00

Voluntary Financial Contribution

Item	Details	Amount
Buildings & Grounds Development	Asphalt repairs and new line marking for basketball/netball court	\$40.00
Amount per family		\$40.00

Additional Optional Item

Item	Details	Amount
School Magazine	A full colour copy of the traditional Macedon Mirror magazine at the end of the year	\$10.00
Amount per copy		\$10.00