

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Boolarra 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

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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.

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
- **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](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

Boolarra Primary School  
**Parent Payment Policy**

**PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES**

**Essential Student Learning Items**

| Area                          | Explanation  | Cost     |
|-------------------------------|--|----------|
| Book pack for each Year level | <i>This charge covers the supply of the book pack.<br/>Includes all classroom items, such as stationery, required by students throughout the year.<br/>Reader satchels are supplied to Prep students.</i>  | \$30.00  |
| Class Materials               | <i>This includes tissues, printed materials and the supply of all consumable materials used in the classroom including art supplies.</i>   | \$30.00  |
| Essential learning Areas      | <i>Maths, English, STEAM, Art, Performing Arts, Health, Science and Humanities. These funds support the areas of the curriculum that require disposable items such as Art/Craft materials, science materials, cooking disposable, maths items and technology projects.</i> | \$60.00  |
| AON Risk                      | <i>Student Insurance Policy</i>  | \$12.00  |
| Mathletics                    |  | \$18.00  |
|                               |  | \$150.00 |

- Student textbooks
- Print or resource materials in lieu of textbooks
- Student requisites and stationery
- Computer/Photocopy printing
- Materials used or consumed where a pupil takes possession of an article Eg: Art, Science, Cooking

**Optional Items**

| <b>Additional School Activities</b><br><i>(These will be confirmed closer to the event. The charges listed below are subject to confirmation)</i> |   |               |
|---|---|---------------|
| Excursions 1 x Major Excursion per year   | Approx \$40.00  | All grades    |
| Camp Sovereign Hill Ballarat/Melbourne<br>20 <sup>th</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2019  | Approx \$400 To Be Confirmed.<br>Payment plan can be arranged | Year 5 and 6. |
| Year 3-4 Camp<br>Yet to be decided  | Approx \$350 To be confirmed                                  | Year 3 and 4  |

|  |  |                                 |
|--|--|---------------------------------|
|  | Payment plan can be arranged   |                                 |
| Sporting Activities (Years 3 – 6)                          | This cost is usually to meet the cost of the transport if bus is required.<br>Every effort is to use private vehicles. | Usually around \$5 per activity |
| Year 2 Sleepover   | Food and activities  | Approx \$20                     |
| Foundation/ 1 Dinner                                       | Food and activities  | Approx \$10                     |
| Whole School Visiting Performances<br>Dates to be Advised. | This charge is for whole school visiting performances when arranged.   | Usually around \$8.00 per visit |
| Life Education Van   | Parents have the option of paying for this events at the time of the event   | \$10.00                         |
| Yinnar & District Sports Day                               | Transport Costs  | \$5.00 per student              |
| Grade 6 Commemorative Graduation<br>Polo Shirt printing.   | Optional Item for purchase for families of students in Grade 6.  | Hoodie \$42.00<br>Top \$28.00   |

## **PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS**

*If you are having difficulty paying your fees, please contact the Principal. We also offer parents the opportunity to set up a payment plan for payment of fees and camps, again this should be discussed with the Principal. Any such contact will remain strictly confidential.*

## **FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS**

- *Second hand and low cost options e.g. school clothing, low cost suppliers*
- *CSEF*
- *State Schools Relief*
- *Local community supports*

## **CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP**

*Parents experiencing hardship:*

- *Should in the first instance contact the office (Sharon) by phone, email or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments. If parents prefer or have not had their issue resolved parents can set up a time to meet with the Principal.*
- *Parents will need to show that they are indeed in hardship and require support. Support can be regarding provision of clothing from second hand pool, support from States School Relief, Support with payment options and support for camps, excursions and other costs associated with school programs.*

**Note:** in reflecting on the school's hardship arrangements, schools could consider their proactive strategies to engage with parents disconnected from the school who may be experiencing hardship, such as discretely approaching families who may need support and special payment arrangements.

## **CSEF (Camps, Sports, Excursions Fund)**

*Some families who hold current Health Care Card or other Concession Cards may be eligible for the Camps, Sports, Excursions Fund.*

*To be eligible for the fund, a parent or legal guardian of a student attending a registered Government or non-government Victorian primary or secondary school must:*

- *on the first day of Term two, or*
- *on the first day of Term three:*
  - *a) be an eligible beneficiary within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004, that is, be the holder of a Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Centrelink Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder, OR*
  - *b) be a temporary foster parent, and;*
  - *c) submit an application to the school by the due date.*

*Parents who receive a Carer Allowance on behalf of a child, or any other benefit or allowance not income tested by Centrelink, are not eligible for the CSEF unless they also comply with one of (a) or (b) above.*

*The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) runs over four years and will provide payments 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. \$125 per year is paid for eligible primary school students, with \$225 per year paid for eligible secondary school student. Payments are made directly to the school and are tied to the student.*

## **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

- *The policy and the school's implementation will be communicated with the school community through School Newsletter and school website.*
- *Parents are able to raise any issues, make general inquiries about charges with the school office or school Principal.*

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

- *School Council will monitor the implementation of the policy; identify the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents. The review of this policy will take place at the November School Council meeting each year and be ratified for the next year at this meeting.*

**Date of approval by School Council**

**28/11/2018**