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TEMPLATE

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## 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

# Upwey South Primary School

## Parent Payment Policy

### PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

School Councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories – Essential Education Items (EEI), Optional Extras and Voluntary Financial Contributions.

This policy ensures that:

- costs are kept to a minimum
- payment requests are clearly itemised and accurately costed under the three parent payment categories
- no student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution
- access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level will not be withheld as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.

Upwey South Primary School spends considerable time selecting the most appropriate items and services to meet the needs of our students.

Parents and guardians also have the option of *purchasing* equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications provided by the school. There may also be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.

### Parent Payment Categories

**(EEI) Essential Education Items** are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents or guardians are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate.

These items include:

- materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. Art, Science, Japanese, Performing Arts)
- school uniform
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

### ESSENTIAL EDUCATION ITEMS

<i>Item</i>	<i>Specifications</i>	<i>Cost</i>
<i>Booklist stationery items</i>	<i>Pens, pencils, scissors, glue sticks, exercise books etc.</i>	<i>Refer to individual level booklists</i>
<i>Bulk classroom materials</i>	<i>Cooking ingredients, display paper, laminating pouches, art supplies etc.</i>	<i>Refer to individual level booklists</i>
<i>Subject area costs</i>	<i>English – Spellodrome &amp; Sunshine Online</i>	<i>\$7</i>
	<i>English – Reading Eggs (Foundation only)</i>	<i>\$7</i>
	<i>Maths – Mathletics</i>	<i>\$18</i>

**Optional extras** are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- student computer printing for personal use
- school owned iPad for usage by students as part of the 1:1 program
- swimming program
- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, chess, etc.
- school-based performances, productions and events
- school photos

<i>Item</i>	<i>Specifications</i>	<i>Amount</i>

**Voluntary financial contributions** are for those items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance.

#### VOLUNTARY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

<i>Item</i>	<i>Specifications</i>	<i>Suggested Amount</i>
<i>Suggested Voluntary amount</i>	<i>Funds to pay for the cost of materials used to “upgrade” school facilities and the upgrade of iPads and notebooks for student use. This will promote student engagement and align practices throughout the school</i>	<i>\$100 per family</i>

### **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.

Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment requests/letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, three payment options have been developed:

- Option A                      Full amount at the beginning of Term 1
- Option B                      Payment by 3 instalments by end of Term 1
- Option C                      Other payment arrangements

<i>Option A</i>	<i>Full amount to be paid by Monday 22nd January 2018</i>
<i>Option B</i>	<i>Payment by 3 instalments – 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018</i>
<i>Option C</i>	<i>Payment by arrangement with school office – payment plan to be signed</i>

Alternative payment options are available through the school and parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

Payment requests to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an Essential Education Item, Optional Extra or Voluntary Financial Contribution.

Receipts will be issued to parents only upon request.

Reminders for unpaid Essential Education Items or Optional Extras will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.

Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued per year to parents and guardians.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS**

There are a number of support options available for parents including, but not limited to;

- Second hand uniform shop

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education the school operates a second-hand school uniform shop.

- CSEF (Camps, Sports & Excursion Fund) available to eligible parents via application
- State Schools Relief support

### **CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP**

Upwey South Primary School makes every effort to keep the cost and number of items needed to be purchased to a minimum. We also try to ensure that the costs are affordable to all parents. If you will have difficulty making payments please make an appointment to speak to Clare Butterworth (Business Manager) to discuss possible support options and flexible payment arrangements. Any information about your personal financial circumstances, payment arrangements or status will be kept strictly confidential.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

Upwey South Primary School makes every effort to provide a fair and transparent payment policy to suit the school and parents alike. The Parent Payment Policy is revised annually and evaluated by School Council to ensure payment requests are reasonable and necessary as part of the curriculum. Please see our friendly office staff should you need to clarify any charges. A copy of the current policy is available on our website and a copy is available on request from the office at any time.

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

School council 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. 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.

<b>Date of approval by</b>	<b>Finance</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
	<b>School Council</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>