

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION 2019

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

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.

- **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

RINGWOOD SECONDARY COLLEGE

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES 2019

1. ESSENTIAL STUDENT LEARNING ITEMS:

Materials, Equipment & Service \$450 :

The College Council is required to purchase and maintain a range of administrative and teaching equipment and other consumable items throughout the school.

These items are not funded through Government sources and include additional purchase, lease and hire of specialist equipment and audio visual equipment, printed class materials and booklets, various competition fees and schools sports. Students are also provided with a locker for daily use.

We want to assure you that the College Council has made a considerable effort to ensure that the Parent Payments Policy is fair and contains a range of payment options. The charges have been kept as low as possible, whilst aiming to maintain the current high standard of education. Please note that it is College Council's expectation that families who choose to allow their children to participate in activities such as the Deb Ball, and interstate and overseas trips, will have made arrangements to pay for essential education items

2. VOLUNTARY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS:

Grounds Levy \$55:

A fee of \$55 per family will be charged to cover the cost of maintaining the College grounds, particularly gardening and landscaping. Significant improvements have been made in the development of the College grounds and garden areas in the past few years and the new Junior School will include substantial replanting and landscaping.

Building Fund (Tax Deductible) \$150:

Parents who have attended one of the many events at the College will have noticed the extensive building program already completed and further works in progress. Recent additions include a canteen shelter area, new canteen furniture and expanded technical office to service students' needs. In 2017 we completed the Junior School and in 2018 planning is commencing for the next stage. We are funding provision of Solar Technology, air conditioning, projectors for all classrooms and additional furniture and equipment. To support the building programs at the College, parents are asked to contribute \$150 to the Building Fund.

Chaplaincy Donation Support Program \$50:

Adam Bryant, our College Chaplain, is part of our excellent welfare team that supports all our students and the wider community. This vital role is not funded by the National Chaplaincy Program and relies heavily on the voluntary contribution of families and community partners.

Information Technology Support \$70:

A levy of \$70 per student is charged for the provision of additional infrastructure to improve the access to computer equipment. Although some funding for IT is provided by Government, this funding does not cover all the costs needed to ensure our network is robust and secure. This levy will enable the College to provide up to date technology and to meet its priorities for student learning.

Sick Bay Attendant \$50:

A levy of \$50 is charged for the provision of a school sick bay attendant. This provides the services of a qualified attendant during school hours, and/or major external sporting events. The sick bay is open on a daily basis between 9.00am and 3.15pm.

3. **OPTIONAL EXTRAS:**

College Magazine \$28:

The College Magazine is available at a cost of \$28 per book. It is an excellent publication, capturing the highlights of the College year.

Student Accident Insurance \$32:

An excellent (voluntary) student insurance scheme exists. It covers students 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year for stipulated events. For example, students have been compensated for broken limbs and medical treatment from injuries sustained during sports days, and on weekends. A table of compensation is available on request.

Music Program Levy \$495:

Our extensive Music Program which includes both significant instrumental and vocal sections is only possible with the continued support of parents and significant assistance of the Music Association. The music fee increase in 2018 is needed to cover overall salary increases to support our extensive program.

Music Program Levy (cont'd)

There is a **compulsory charge of \$495** payable to cover the cost of this program and the fee must be paid no later than February 23, 2018 unless you have established an instalment plan for the payment of your College Charges. **The levy is reduced to \$400 for the second and subsequent child.** Those students who only wish to be part of the choral program pay a lower fee of \$200. Piano lessons are undertaken on an individual basis with the piano teacher. It is an expectation that students who are taking lessons through this arrangement will participate in an ensemble, choir or the main College Production.

This will be strictly enforced in 2018 and students will not be permitted to commence until payment arrangements have been finalised. The last day for finalising arrangements for the music program is February 23, 2018.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Parents will be provided with early notification of annual payment requests (a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year). Reasonable notice will be given for any other payment requests during the year (i.e. excursions).

Parents will be permitted to make payments in instalments, and be provided with several methods of making payment including, cash, cheque, EFTPOS and Direct Deposit. Parents are able to enter into confidential payment arrangements by contacting the Linda Wheeler on 9870 2002 or lwheeler@ringwoodsc.vic.edu.au. You may also email your completed College Charges Sheet if you prefer.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

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

- Online second hand book and uniform shop
- Day user Laptop program
- Camps, Sports & Excursion Funding (CSEF) available to eligible parents
- State Schools Relief support available for uniforms/footwear/calculators/textbooks (via the College Wellbeing Team)
- Local community support (Wellbeing team can provide further information)

Information regarding support options is available from the General Office and will be advertised periodically in the College Newsletter and on the website.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The College understands that families may experience financial difficulties or hardship at times and may be unable to meet full or part payments requested. Families are invited to contact Linda Wheeler to make payment arrangements or alternatively, can contact the Wellbeing team for a confidential discussion and information regarding support options.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The Parent Payment Policy and Implementation will be published on the College website. It will also be distributed to families each year along with the annual payment request.

General enquiries regarding parent charges may be made to the College 9870 2002. Concerns should be directed in the first instance to Linda Wheeler, or email lwheeler@ringwoodsc.vic.edu.au.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The College Council (via the Resources Committee) will conduct an annual review of the implementation of the Parent Payment Policy including addressing any concerns raised by the College community. Any changes to the Policy Implementation will be reported back to the community via notice on the College website and report in the College Newsletter.

Date of approval by School Council

21st March 2018