

Moonee Ponds West Primary School



Parent/Carer Payment Policy and Implementation

PURPOSE:

To ensure that parent/carers 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/carers 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/carers payment charges approved by school councils that may vary from one school to the next.

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/carers payment charges and can request payments from parent/carers 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/Carers 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/carers choose to access them for students, they are required to pay for them.

Voluntary Financial Contributions

Parents/carers 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/Carers Payment Categories**" provides examples of items and materials under each category.

UNDERSTANDING PARENT PAYMENT CATEGORIES

The below 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/carer 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:** Costs to parents/carers 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/carers are well informed of the payment options and supports available for those experiencing hardship
- **Respect and Confidentiality:** Parents/carers 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/carer 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/CARERS

When school councils consider the proposed requests for parent/carer payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents/carers 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/carers 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/carers so that they know what to expect and what supports they can access
- parent/carers are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees (e.g. a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year). This enables parents to save and budget accordingly.
- Parents/carers are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year- ensuring parents/carers 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/carers 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/carers is not permitted
- there will be only one reminder notice to parents/carers for voluntary financial contributions per year
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential or optional items accepted by parents/carers are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent/carer payment arrangement with the school.

Endorsed by School Council: xxx



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/carer payment fees. There are a range of support options available to support and assist parents/carers. These can be accessed through [“Cost support for families.”](#)

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/PP_Costsupportforfamilies.docx

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/carers are provided the name and contact details of a nominated parent/carer payment contact person at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS/CARERS

In respect to each school’s development of its parent/carer 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/carers.

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.

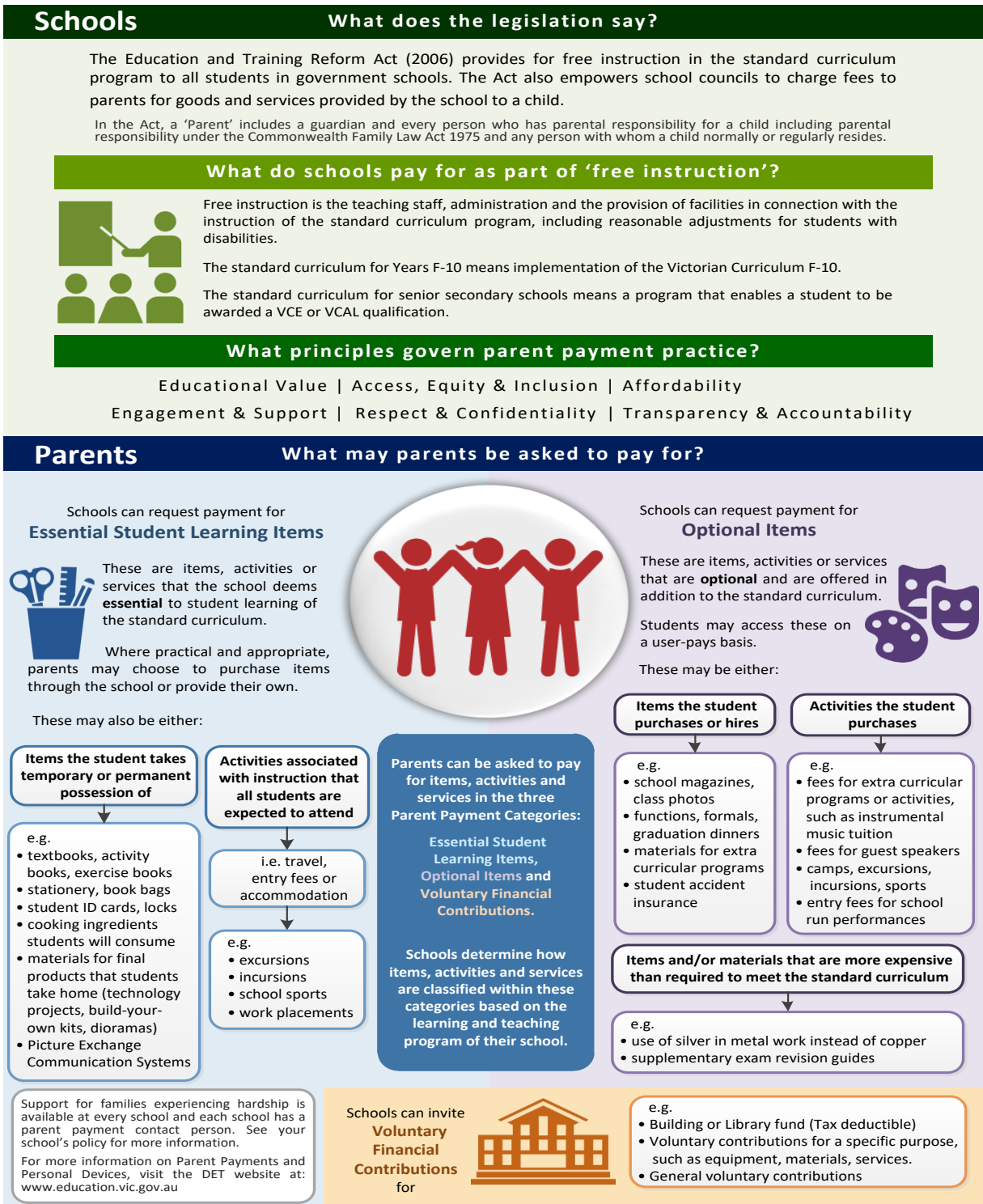
The full Parent/Carer Payment Policy is available from the Department’s [School Policy and Advisory Guide.](#)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx>

UNDERSTANDING PARENT PAYMENT CATEGORIES

The below diagram "Understanding Parent/Carer Payment Categories" provides examples of items and materials under each category.

Understanding Parent Payment Categories



PARENT CARER PAYMENT CHARGES

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 carers are requested to pay the school to provide.

These items include;

- materials that the student takes possession of, examples include: books & student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. Art, Japanese, cooking)
- access to the Athletics site
- transport and entrance for camps, excursions and weekly sport costs for years 5 and 6 which all students are expected to attend.

Optional education items (or non-essential materials and services) 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 carers choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items may include;

- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, chess classes
- school-based performances, productions and events
- class photographs.

Voluntary financial contributions are for those items and services that parents or carers are invited to make a donation to the school, for example computer purchases or a library or building fund.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Parents and carers will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (e.g. a minimum of six weeks). Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment requests/letters fair and reasonable.

Alternative payment options are available through the school and parents/carers 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 education item or voluntary financial contribution.

Receipts will be issued to parents upon making payment.

Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional extras will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents/carers, 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 carers.

All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and carers are kept confidential.

FAMILY 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/carers, including the Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund, Moonee Ponds West Fee Assistance Program and State Schools Relief Committee support.

SECOND-HAND UNIFORM SHOP

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

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The Parent/Carer Payments policy will be updated and published on the school website in February each year. Parent Payment notices will be issued to families through the students.

All inquiries regarding parent payments should be directed to the School Principal.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The parent/carers payments policy will be reviewed annually by the Resources Committee at the first meeting of each year and endorsed at the first School Council meeting of the year.