

(This section cannot be modified)

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 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.

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.

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

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



Parent Payment Policy

Schools will develop their own implementation approach; however the following elements need to be covered to comply with the policy:

At Mornington Primary School we take great pride in offering a wide range of challenging and exciting educational opportunities for all our students. This will continue in 2017 and beyond. Significant school resources, both human and financial, are allocated each year towards the provision of these programs.

School Council sets the level of parent payments and voluntary contributions on an annual basis and each year a substantial conversation takes place regarding this. If you average out the educational expenses over the year – excluding uniforms, you get a figure of approximately \$10 per week – less for some year levels. This figure includes stationery, consumables, excursions, camps and an excellent education. Of course there may be other expenses, such as student notebook program, RACV Energy Breakthrough or instrumental program – classified as ‘optional extras’ and based on parent choice.

Mornington Primary School Council will continue to ensure cost to parents are maintained to the minimum needed to maintain the excellent educational opportunities offered to our students.

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES FOR 2017

- clear specification of the Items, description and costs within the three payment categories
- articulate how payment requests support/enrich the school's learning/teaching program

<u>Sect A – Parent-funded Essential Items</u>		\$50 - \$80
Personal Stationery/Books <i>These are used on a daily basis by the students and are central to almost all class activities. Students take possession of these at the end of the year.</i>		
Consumables and Enrichment materials which supplement student stationery/books and are provided by the school:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Consumable Class Materials:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Classroom printing & photocopying ○ Consumables for units of inquiry, Maths & English activities. <i>These materials are used on a daily basis and are central to the core learning areas and the implementation of our PYP inquiry methodology.</i>	\$80	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Enrichment materials:</u> Take home Readers & Library books, Equipment and supplies for Visual Arts, Phys. Ed, Performing Arts, library, ICT & Science <i>These enrichment materials are essential in providing a broad and well-rounded education to our students.</i>	\$50	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Mathletics & Reading Eggs/Express:</u> Annual subscription for on-line homework programs <i>The subscription is purchased on behalf of all students. The bulk purchase of the programs enables substantial savings for families. The programs are predominantly designed for home use.</i>	\$22	
Total		<u>\$152</u>
<u>Payable as required:</u>		

Swimming & water safety (Prep – Year6)	\$35 - \$55 (Approximately)	
Camps (Years 3 – 6)	\$220 - \$280 (Approximately)	
Excursions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curriculum Excursions/Incursions ▪ House Athletics (Grades 3 – 6 only) Interschool Sports (Grade 5/6 only) 	\$30 - \$80 \$30 \$50	
Uniform: (as required)		

Sect B – Optional Extras (Parent Funded Extras & Special programs):

(Payment for these programs is to be requested as required)

1:1 Notebook

Grade 6 Graduation

Student Leadership

RACV Energy Breakthrough

School Production

Choir

Band

Instrumental Music

District/Zone Selection

Special Religious Instruction

Sect C – Voluntary Contributions (per family)

- Grounds Maintenance \$50
 - Technology \$50
- \$ _____

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Include options to pay in instalments

We endeavour to provide ample time for payments to be made; in particular, for camps and swimming where the costs are greater. To assist parents in planning and managing school payments, BPay and Direct Debit options are available, as well as eftpos and over-the-counter payments at the office. Parents can 'schedule' regular payments to 'family' accounts and utilize these for any school payments with parents' consent.

Payment can also be made by instalments after discussion with Olympia Maselli, Business Manager.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The following support options are available for parents:

- *The MPS 'second hand uniform shop' can provide inexpensive school uniform items.*
- *The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund has been established to support families in meeting costs incurred in these school activities.* 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 one, or;
 - on the first day of Term two;
- 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.
- *State Schools Relief can also provide support to families in meeting school-associated costs.*
- *Local community supports can also provide support at times.*

For information regarding any of the above options, please contact the school office – 5976 5500

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Detail how the school will provide support to parents experiencing hardship, including:

- *name and details of nominated parent payment contact person who parents can communicate with by phone, email or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments.*
- *the processes for meeting/communicating with parents experiencing hardship, including information to be provided*

Families experiencing hardships in making payments for school-related costs should contact Olympia Maselli, School Business Manager, to discuss possible options and ways in which the school may assist in this matter. Contact details are:

- *School telephone – 5976 5500*
- *School Email – mornington.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au*

The school will also work with families who may be experiencing hardship, through our wellbeing processes including assistant principals Tina Vallance and Susan Mattingley, as well as our wellbeing officer, Cath Sheridan.

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.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- *Outline how the policy and the school's implementation will be communicated with the school community. Schools are encouraged to have this prominently on the school website.*
- *State the opportunities available for parents to raise any issues, make general inquiries about charges and the contact details where complaints can be referred*

MONITORING, REVIEW & COMMUNICATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- *Include a statement about the responsibility of the school council to monitor the implementation of the policy, identify the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents, how/when it will be reported back to the school community, and timing and processes of review.*

The following procedures will take place to ensure the appropriate review and communication of the policy occurs:

- The 'Mornington Primary School, Parent Payments Policy' will be reviewed and endorsed annually by School Council, with respect to the payment schedule for the following year.
- The parent payments endorsed by school council each year will be communicated via the school newsletter early in term 4, for the following year.
- The Parent Payments Policy and associated annual payments will be posted on the school website following school council endorsement.
- Parent can contact the school principal regarding any issues related to the parent payments.

Endorsed by School Council

November, 2017