

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Monbulk 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 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
- **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. Monbulk Primary School has 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, Monbulk Primary School Council will engage in effective communication with the school community and has strategies in place to ensure they are aware of and understand the needs and views of parents.

## 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 by installment and be provided with several methods of making payment including, Qkr Parent Payment app, cheque, EFTPOS/ Credit card. Parents are able to enter into confidential payment arrangements by contacting the Business Manager on 039756 6481 or via email at : monbulk.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au.

## FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

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

- In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children’s education the school operates a second–hand school uniform shop. Opening times are communicated through the weekly newsletter. The Second hand uniform shop is located in the main building
- Camps, Sports & Excursion Funding (CSEF) available to eligible parents and who have completed the required application
- State Schools Relief support available for uniforms/footwear/calculators/textbooks (via the Principal)
- Local community supports

Information regarding support options is available from the general office and will be advertised periodically in the School Newsletter.

## CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Monbulk Primary School 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 the Principal, Lynn Ordish for a confidential discussion and information regarding support options.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

The Parent Payment Policy and Implementation will be published on the School 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 School office on 9756 6481. Concerns should be directed in the first instance to the Principal or Business Manager.

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

The Monbulk Primary School Council (via the Finance Committee) will conduct an annual review of the implementation of the Parent Payment Policy including addressing any concerns raised by the School community. Any changes to the Policy Implementation will be reported back to the community via the school website and the school Newsletter and via Compass Parent Portal.

**Date of approval by School Council:-**

# 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



# Parent Payment Policy

## **PURPOSE**

To ensure school-level parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the Department's policy requirements.

## **POLICY GUIDELINES**

### **Definition**

School councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payment policy that ensures:

- all students have access to the standard curriculum program
- it covers the three parent payment categories i.e. essential education items, optional extras or voluntary financial contributions
- the school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories
- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately priced
- cost is kept to a minimum
- payment requests must be clearly itemised within each category
- parents/guardians are given the option of purchasing equivalent essential education items themselves, in consultation with the school
- students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions. For example if parents/guardians choose for their children not to attend a compulsory excursion/camp an alternative option needs to be provided
- the status and details of any payments or non-payments are confidential
- parents are provided with early notice of payment requests (e.g. a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year)
- payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
- it meets the community's expectations and is provided to parents.
- It is not acceptable to use coercion or harass parents/guardians to obtain payment
- Principals must ensure any payment records are kept confidential. The public identification of students or their parents/guardians who have or have not made a payment or financial contribution is unacceptable and must not occur in any circumstance

- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by schools to obtain any funds from parents/guardians.

## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

### PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

This table describes the three parent payment categories that school councils can request payments from parents.

Category	Description
<p><b>Essential education items</b></p>	<p>These are items which parents/guardians pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and student stationery</li> <li>▪ materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, photography, catering)</li> <li>▪ school uniform (where applicable)</li> <li>▪ activities associated with, but not part of instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport and entrance costs)</li> </ul> <p>Note: If parents/guardians choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this should be done in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions for home economics) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.</p>
<p><b>Optional extras</b></p>	<p>These are items provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students. They are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents/guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.</p> <p>These items include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. student computer printing for personal use)</li> </ul>

- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music)
- school-based performances, productions and events
- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (e.g. the use of more expensive materials)
- materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school magazines)
- school facilities and equipment not associated with providing the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).

**Voluntary financial contributions**

Parents/guardians, or anyone else, can be invited to make a donation to the school for the following purposes:

- contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund (these trust funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)
- contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers or student-related services
- general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

**School-level processes**

Payment requests, letters or CASES21 invoices for student materials and services charges must be accompanied by the following information:

a description of each of the three parent payment categories

- details of what parents are being asked to pay for
- that parents are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier, where appropriate
- the availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the principal if the parent wishes to discuss these
  - administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 financial reporting
  - invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month
  - only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice per year is sent to all parents/guardians
  - receipts are issued to parents upon payment and receipted on CASES 21.



## Support Options

There are a range of support options available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential items including:

- access to State Schools' Relief committee support via the Principal ( Student Wellbeing) to assist with uniforms, shoes, textbooks, stationery and software
- the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund, which is available for eligible families, to cover the costs of school trips, camps and sporting activities (see below)
- welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.

## Camps, Sport and Excursion Fund (CSEF)

Schools are required to use the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) payment for expenses relating to Camps, Sport and/or Excursions for the benefit of the eligible student.

Some common examples of school-organised programs for which the CSEF payment may be used include:

- School camps/trips
- Swimming and other school-organised sporting programs.
- Outdoor education programs.
- Excursions/incursions

The CSEF payment cannot be used towards voluntary school charges, or towards books, stationery, school uniforms, before/after school care, music lessons or other optional items.

Parents and Guardians who hold a valid means-tested concession card or are a temporary foster parent, may be eligible for CSEF. An application form must be completed within the timeframe as communicated via the school newsletter. This allowance is paid to the school to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions or sporting activities for the benefit of your child/ren.

The total CSEF amount per student will be allocated to events as advised by families via event permission/payment forms.

The Principal will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families.

## Other resources

- Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents, see: [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Information on the financial assistance options available for parents and students, including the Youth Allowance Scheme, ABSTUDY and student scholarships, see: [Costs and Financial Assistance](#)
- Financial management, see: [Finance](#)
- Further support, contact the relevant regional office or the School Operations and Governance Unit – Regional Services Group via the School Policy and Advisory Guide email: [theguide@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:theguide@edumail.vic.gov.au)

- Guidelines for parent/guardian complaints processes, see: [Parent Complaints](#)

**Policy Area:**

**Ratified by School Council:**

**Next Review:**