

Parent Payment Policy

St Albans East Primary School

Date: November, 2020



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.

Aim

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent and transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum program.

- **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 with 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.

What can schools charge for?

Schools provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements as outlined in the Victorian Curriculum F-10. School councils are responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents (1) under three categories only - Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary 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.

Implementation

The School will ensure that:

- The school council will monitor the implementation of the policy, identify the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents.
- All students have access to the standard curriculum program.
- Parents and guardians are provided with early notice of requests for payment of essential education items and optional extras (a minimum of six weeks prior to the end of the previous school year).
- The advice to parents/guardians provides a clear description of the payment categories and which category items fall under and that where appropriate, parents/guardians have the option of purchasing equivalent education items themselves in consultation with the school.
- Items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed.
- There is a clearly articulated process for the administration of the **Camps Sports and Excursion Fund**. A copy of the document outlining the process can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/csef.aspx>
- The status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents and guardians are confidential.
- Parents are informed of alternative payment options and invited to contact the principal if they wish to discuss these options.
- Payment requests or letters to parents clearly identify whether the

items are essential education items or optional extras.

- Parents are provided with a receipt upon payment.
- All payments are receipted in CASES21.
- Payments are kept to a minimum and all requests for payment are fair and reasonable.
- A copy of the school-level policy is provided to all parents via the school's public web site, for the purposes of transparency.
- Parents who have difficulty paying for essential items can access a range of support options.
- The status of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel.
- Parents experiencing hardship will not be pursued for outstanding fees from one year to another.
- That the principal as executive officer of the school council ensures that the school-level policy complies with the Department's policy and that all staff are familiar and adhere to it.
- Families are not coerced or harassed for payments.
- Exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families.
- Where families have difficulty making payments, principals are expected to discuss with them the range of support options available, and to negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by instalments.
- The principal is designated the key contact to provide support for families experiencing hardship and can be contacted by phone, email or in person.
- Parents are encouraged to raise issues and make general enquiries about charges with the principal or a nominee in the principal's absence.

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. Please contact the school for further details.

Consideration to hardship arrangements with 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.

The range of support options:

- The '*Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund*', which is available for eligible families, to cover the costs of school trips, camps and sporting activities.
- Access to State Schools' Relief committee support via the principal to assist with uniforms, shoes, textbooks, stationery and software, see

'Financial Assistance for Families'. A copy of this document can be obtained from the school office.

- Welfare and support agencies, such as The Smith Family Scholarship Program, that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.

School councils may invite voluntary financial contributions for:

- 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).
- A specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services such as additional computers) in addition to those funded through the SRP.
- School councils and principals need to clearly identify that this is a voluntary financial contribution and can only be requested once, with one reminder.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

Review Year

2023