



Parent Payments Policy

1. Rationale

1.1 The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program (i.e. eight key learning areas), and empowers School Councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

1.2 Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the Victorian Curriculum and senior secondary certificates (VCE, VCAL and VET programs).

1.3 This policy outlines the process for collection of parent payments to facilitate quality learning for students.

2. Aim

2.1 To ensure the college parent payment processes are compliant with the Department's policy requirements.

2.2 To provide a diverse range of high quality learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing limited government funds with approved financial contributions and payments from parents.

2.3 To ensure fair and equitable resources for use within the school and to create a clear and precise process working in partnership with parents/guardians to support the best learning environment for students.

2.4 To ensure that the fees and contributions are managed effectively at a school level in compliance with relevant Department of Education and Training requirements and guidelines.

3. Implementation

3.1 This policy will ensure that:

- 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 college 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 costed;
- 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 college;
- 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;
- 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);



Parent Payments Policy

- 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.

3.2 Payment plans are available to families experiencing financial difficulties and may be negotiated on a case by case basis.

3.3 The Principal, as executive officer of the School Council, must ensure that this policy complies with the Department's policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.

3.4 It is not acceptable to use coercion or harass parents/guardians to obtain payment.

3.5 The Principal 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.

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

4. Categories

4.1 This section describes the three parent payment categories that the School Council can request payments from parents.

4.2 **Essential education items.** These are items which parents/guardians pay the college to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program and include:

- materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, photography, catering)
- school uniform
- 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).
- Note: If parents/guardians choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this should be done in consultation with the college, and items should meet the specifications provided by the college. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions for home economics) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the college.

4.3 **Optional extras.** 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.

These items include:

- instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. student computer printing for personal use)



Parent Payments Policy

- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music)
- college 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).

4.3 Students wishing to participate in extra-curricular activities such as camps, excursions, trips, dinners, formals, etc must meet the full cost of the activity.

4.4 Students who elect to participate in sporting teams and who are successful in being selected in the associated club's representative teams will be asked to contribute to the costs of games and events, whether school-based or club-based.

4.4 **Voluntary financial contributions.** Parents/guardians, or anyone else, can be invited to make a donation to the college for the following purposes:

- contributions for a specific purpose identified by the college (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, including scholarships for students.

5. Communication with Families

5.1 This policy requires that all communication with parents/guardians, including payment requests, is fair and reasonable.

5.2 The Essential and Optional Items for each year level will be endorsed by the College Board during Term 4 for the following year and distributed to all families soon after. Copies of the Essential and Optional Items will be held at the general office.

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

- 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 Business Manager if the parent wishes to discuss these.

5.4 A copy of this policy is available at the campus office and on the college website.



Parent Payments Policy

6. Administrative and Payment Processes

- 6.1 Administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 financial reporting.
- 6.2 Invoices/statements 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.
- 6.3 Receipts are issued to parents immediately upon payment and receipted on CASES21.

7. Support Options

Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund (CSEF)

The CSEF will be provided by the Victorian Government to assist eligible families to cover the costs of school trips, camps and sporting activities. Parents who hold a valid means-tested concession card or are temporary foster parents may be eligible. The allowance is paid to the college to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions or sporting activities for the benefit of the eligible student/s. Parents must lodge an application form with the college to apply.

8. Other Support Options

- 8.1 There are a range of other support options available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential items including:
- access to State Schools Relief support via the college to assist with clothing/uniforms;
 - welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.
- 8.2 The college will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The college will make decisions about how to manage non-payment of essential education items or optional extras on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.3 Parents/guardians who experience difficulties providing or paying the school to provide essential education items are encouraged to make an appointment with the Business Manager to discuss alternative payment methods and the range of support options available.
- 8.4 The college has made available the Sustainable School Shop website to facilitate the sale and purchase of second hand textbooks and uniform items between families.

9. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually as required by DET legislation and guidelines.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – DET Parent Payment Policy and Implementation

Appendix 2 – Fact Sheet for Families: Understanding Parent Payment Categories