

(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.

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.

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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.

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- 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.

REFUNDS

Findon PS will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally we will not be able to refund payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment.

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.

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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](#)

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PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

RATIONALE:

Findon Primary School is committed to building an education system that champions equity and excellence and ensures that every child is supported to learn both inside and outside the classroom. All Findon students have access to opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstance. Parent payments in all forms contribute to the educational outcomes and wellbeing of all Findon students. The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds. The Department of Education and Training provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) and various programs. 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.

AIMS:

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

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Schools can request payments from parents under three categories: Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items or Voluntary Financial Contributions. Schools determine whether an item, activity or service is an Essential Student Learning Item or an Optional Item within the context of their distinct learning and teaching program.
- Good governance practice will ensure school councils consider and are able to communicate the rationale for the classification of items, activities or services, requested and charged according to the three categories and maintain transparency in this regard.
- This table describes the three parent payment categories within which school councils can request payments from parents.

Category	Description
Essential student learning items	<p>These are items, activities or services that the school deems essential to student learning in the standard curriculum. Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own. Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • items that the student takes temporary or permanent possession of such as text books, student stationery, book bags • materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. technology projects, workbooks, photography) • school uniform (where applicable) • activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend, such as costs associated with excursions. <p>Note: If parents choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this must be done in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the</p>

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Category	Description
	school. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions for Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden) that, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.
Optional items	<p>These are items or services that are optional and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students may access these on a user pays basis. These items include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities the student purchases (e.g. fees for extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum such as instrumental music tuition; fees for guest speakers; optional camps and excursions; entry fees to school based performances, productions and events) • items the student purchases or hires (e.g. netbooks, class photos; graduation functions; materials for extracurricular activities)♣ • items and materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum
Voluntary financial contributions	<p>Parents, or anyone else, can be invited to make a voluntary contribution or donation to the school for the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. These contributions are NOT tax deductible. • general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school. These contributions or donations are NOT tax deductible.♣ • donations to a building fund or library fund (if these funds have been endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office and have a Deductible Gift Recipients (DGR) status). Donations to these funds ARE tax deductible to the donor.

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
- parent/caregivers will be issued with statements of receipted monies termly
- parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next

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- 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
- Receipts will be issued to parents upon payment and receipted on CASES21. Parents who do not receive a receipt should contact the office

Support Options

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

- second hand and sustainable strategies
- community assistance where welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools may provide further assistance to students and their families
- government assistance programs such as State Schools Relief Funds for support via the Principal to assist with clothing and uniforms and Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) for parents and caregivers who have access to a current Health Care Card are eligible to apply
- other supports available as listed in DET [“Cost support for families.”](#)
- options for parents/caregivers to pay in instalments

Parents experiencing hardship should contact the Principal either in person or via phone or email to discuss further options for financial support.

Communication with parents

All payment requests, booklists, letters or CASES21 invoices for student materials and service charges will 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 this
- 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 and caregivers
- a copy of this policy is available through the school office and on the school website and feedback can be provided to the Principal in relation to the policies implementation

EVALUATION:

Findon will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy annually as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community

REFERENCE:

DET Parent Payment Policy

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

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

Parent Payment Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpaymentfaqs.aspx>

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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 Categories Flowchart

What does free instruction mean?

The legislative requirements provide that instruction in the STANDARD CURRICULUM must be delivered free to all students in government schools.

The STANDARD CURRICULUM is curriculum that is assessed under the VELS, VCE, VCAL

Legislative requirements of FREE INSTRUCTION also mean that schools cannot require parents to pay for:

- Instruction in the STANDARD CURRICULUM
- Instructional resources for the STANDARD CURRICULUM
- Instructional support for the STANDARD CURRICULUM
- Administration that is associated with the STANDARD CURRICULUM

Does include:

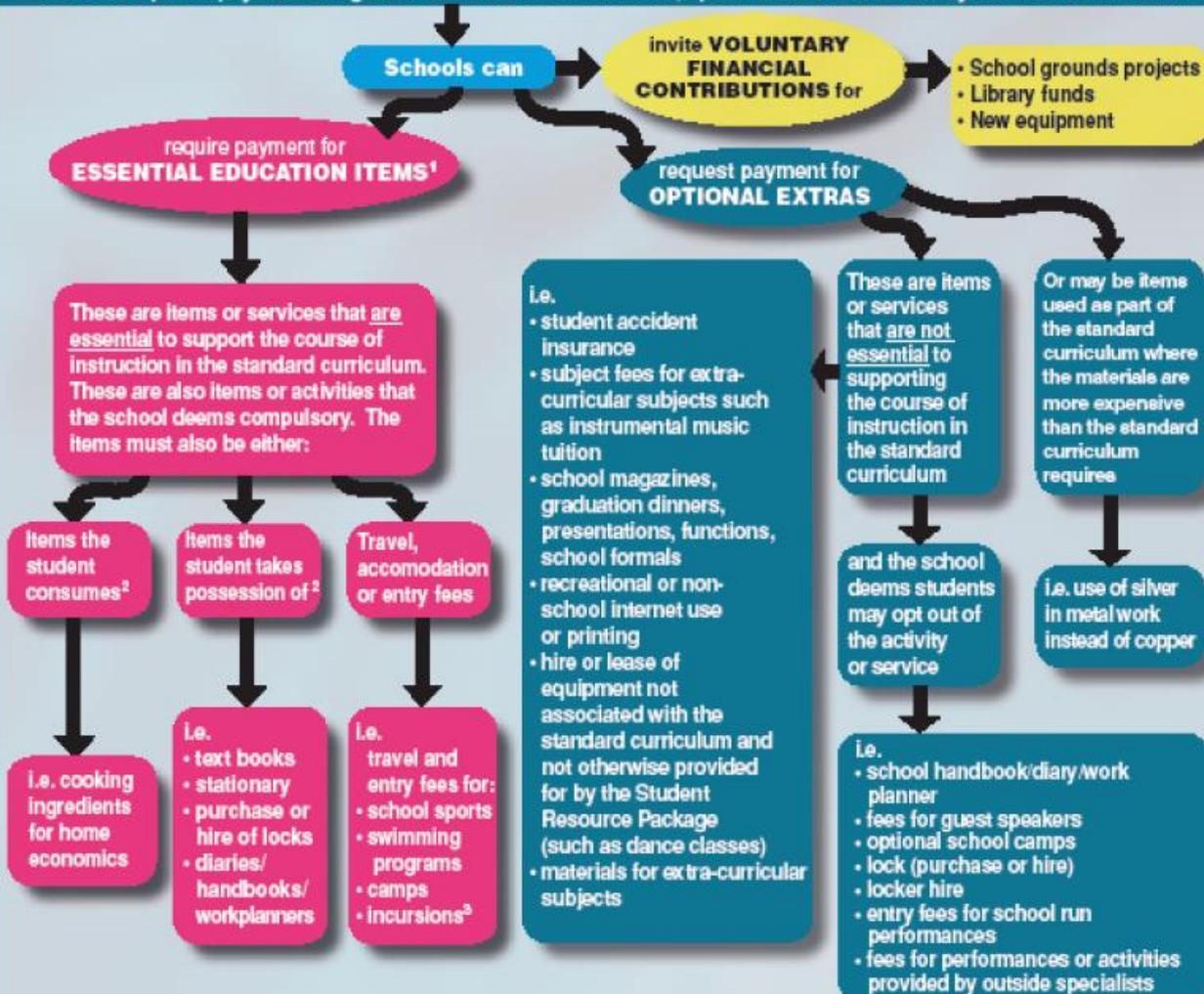
- 'elective' subjects where students can select from a range of different alternatives
- VET in Schools programs
- school sports
- camps/excursions and attendance at school performances, where the school deems such activities compulsory

Does not include extra-curricular activities i.e. dance classes

- such as instruction provided by visiting specialists or VET instruction
- such as library resources, school nurses or first aid equipment
- such as essential printing or photocopying
- such as student ID cards or VET administration including VET cluster administration

What may parents be asked to pay for?

There are 3 parent payment categories: essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions



Footnotes:

1. Costs that could be considered instruction, instructional support, instructional resources, instructional administration, or school facilities cannot be charged i.e. consumable materials held by the school (other than cooking ingredients) and are required as part of the standard curriculum (such as paint, tissues, glue, laboratory chemicals, etc).

2. Students should not be charged for material they do not actually consume or take possession of.

3. 'incursions' are activities provided by outside specialists that are equivalent to excursions but are held at the school. When incursions are organised as part of the standard curriculum program, instruction is free and cannot be charged for. However, 'entrance fees' for the use of the facilities or equipment may be charged for.