

Flemington Primary School

Parent Payment Policy



1. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE:

To ensure that Parent/carer payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

2. POLICY STATEMENT:

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.

This Flemington Primary School policy retains all information provided in the DET Parent Payment Policy and Implementation template and has been adapted to suit the School's standard policy format where required.

3. DEFINITIONS:

- **Parent/carer** - 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.
- **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/carers 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/carers choose to access them for students, they are required to pay for them.
- **Voluntary Financial Contributions** – are those items that Parents/carers 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.

4. ACTION GUIDELINES:

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/carers under three categories only- Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Financial Contributions.

In this Policy's Attachment there is a diagram of "Understanding Parent Payment Categories" providing examples of items and materials under each category.

In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following 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/carers 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/carers are well informed of the payment options and supports available for those experiencing hardship;
- **Respect and Confidentiality:** Parents/carers and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement and the identity and personal information of all Parents/carers and students are kept confidential in respect to parent payments; and
- **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/carers

When school councils consider the proposed requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most Parents/carers 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/carers 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/carers so that they know what to expect and what supports they can access;
- Parents/carers 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/carers to save and budget accordingly;

- Parents/carers are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year- ensuring Parents/carers 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/carers 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/carers for voluntary financial contributions per year;
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential or optional items accepted by Parents/carers 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/carers. These can be accessed through “Cost support for families” – see references section.

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/carers experiencing financial difficulty.

All Parents/carers 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/carers

In respect to the School’s development of its parent payments, school council 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/carers.

5. MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW:

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.

6. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS:

- Electronic Funds Management Policy
- Instrumental Music Finance Policy
- Privacy Policy

7. REFERENCES:

- DET School Policy Advisory Guide - Parent Payments
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx>
- DET Cost Support For Families
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/PP_Costsupportforfamilies.docx
- DET Parent Payments in Victorian Government Schools Frequently Asked Questions for Parents
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/PP_FAQforparents.docx
- DET Parent Payment Policy and Implementation template
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/PP_Policytemplate.docx

8. REVISION HISTORY:

This DRAFT policy was PROVISIONALLY ratified by School Council in on NOVEMBER 27TH, 2017. IT WILL BE PUBLISHED FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS UNTIL FRIDAY DECEMBER 15TH, 2017.

It will be reviewed as determined by School Council or every 3 years.

9. ATTACHMENT

Understanding Parent Payment Categories

