

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.

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 diagram "**Understanding Parent Payment Categories**" on page 4 provides examples of items and materials under each category.

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.

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. 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.

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](#)

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

 BERWICK COLLEGE POLICY	TITLE	PARENT PAYMENT		
	VERSION/YEAR	2/2017		
	PUBLISHED LOCATIONS	eWorkspace, Website		
	ISSUE DATE	FEBRUARY 2017		
	REVIEW DATE	FEBRUARY 2018		
	REVIEWED BY	FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE	RATIFIED BY	COLLEGE COUNCIL
PURPOSE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that Berwick College parent payment practices meet all legislative requirements and are consistent, transparent, ensuring all students have access to the standard curriculum. To establish and maintain a high level of professional standards in relation to all activities within the College. This policy is in accord with the College's 'Mission Statement', 'Values' and 'Service Standards'. To provide policy and procedure direction to all staff, students, parents and volunteers of Berwick College. 			
BACKGROUND:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. The Department provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) and various programs. This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs but not all programs such as elective units with additional fees or resources provided by the College. 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 Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and senior secondary certificates (VCE, VCAL and VET programs). 			
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DET Parent Payments Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Sections 2.2.4. (1), 2.3.6 (1)(c), 2.2. 			

RATIONALE:

Berwick College Council's priority is to provide a broad range of educational programs, extra-curricular activities, resources and facilities for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. Parent contributions, in all forms, assist the College in providing an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by the school community.

IMPLEMENTATION:

To supplement limited government funds, College Council is able to request approved parent payments in three categories:

- Essential education items;
- Optional education items; and
- Voluntary financial contributions.

Parent payment requests will be clearly itemised within each category and students will not be 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 will be provided.

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

There are three categories of parent payments.

1. Essential education items

Are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. These items can include:

- Materials that the student takes possession of, including 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, ceramics, photography, catering);
- School uniform; and/or
- Transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

2. Optional education 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 specific selective programs such as the Presentation Ball, Academies, overseas trips, instrumental lessons etc., or specific selective units of study for students, they are required to pay for them.

3. Voluntary financial contributions

The College may invite parents and guardians to make a donation in the form of a voluntary financial contribution to the school and these may be tax deductible. These may include:

- Contributions to a building, equipment or library fund
- Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Methods of payment available are cash, cheque, EFTPOS (minimum of \$20) or BPAY (please call the General Office (8768 1000) to obtain Family Reference Number and Biller Code).

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist parents, including:

- The Camps, Sports and Excursion fund (CSEF) supports families who met eligibility criteria set by the Victorian Government to ensure the student has the opportunity to participate in important, educational trips, camps and sporting activities.
- The State Schools Relief Committee support, applications can be made via the Wellbeing Team to assist with uniforms, shoes, textbooks, stationery and software
- Local community support such as the City of Casey NILS program is regularly advertised in the College Newsletter
- Payment by affordable installments
- Discount if parent/guardian holds a valid Centrelink Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card
- The College provides the online service of the Sustainable School Shop to provide access for recycling and trading of school approved secondhand items such as text books and uniform.
- Information on the financial assistance options available for parents and students, is available from our Wellbeing Team including the Youth Allowance Scheme, ABSTUDY and student scholarships

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The College will provide support to parents experiencing hardship, including:

- parents can communicate with by phone, email, in writing or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments to the Principal and/or Business Manager who is the nominated parent payment contact person;

- parents/guardians who experience difficulties providing, or paying the school to provide, essential education items, should be encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal or Business Manager to discuss alternative payment methods;
- an early payment incentives for families who have fully paid their fees i.e. College Specific Fees, Year 7 Camp, Specific Selective Programs, VCE Edrolo and elective units with additional fees are eligible for \$500 credit on the family account for each year level.
- payment plans which must be finalised by the end of Term 3.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Correspondence with all families detailing parent payment obligations and options will be provided Term 3 in preparation for Course Selection at least three months prior to the end of the previous school year. This enables parents to save and budget accordingly. This information will also be available on the College's website - Course Information and Fees.

CASES21 invoices for unpaid essential education items or curriculum requirements 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 is to be sent to all parents and guardians. Receipts are issued to parents immediately upon payment and entered on CASES21.

Berwick College staff will ensure any records of payment or contribution by parents and guardians is kept confidential.

The public identification of students or their parents and guardians who have or have not made a payment or financial contribution is deemed unacceptable and will not occur in any circumstances.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

It is the responsibility of Berwick College Council to monitor the implementation of this policy, identify the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents.

EVALUATION:

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the College Council Finance Sub-Committee to confirm/enhance internal control procedures as part of the College's review cycle.