

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

KATANDRA SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2020

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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.

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

Essential Student Learning Items

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

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.

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; and
- 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.

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.

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.

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 IMPLEMENTATION

(a) Parent Payment Charges

- School Essential Expenses
- Life Skills
- Art
- iPad Applications
- Katandra School Bus Transport

(b) Payment Arrangements and Methods

- Yearly Payment
- Term Payment
- Weekly Payment
- Direct Deposit to the Katandra School Official Account
BSB: 063 881
Account Number: 1002 8067
- BPay created by Case21 on Family Statement and Student Invoices

(c) Family Support Options

- New and second-hand uniform shop
- CSEF
- State school's relief
- Local community supports

RATIONALE

The Education & Training Reform Act empowers School Councils to charge parents for goods and services used in the course of instruction of their children, as well as to raise funds. School Council recognizes that some families experience financial hardship (want to pay but cannot) from time to time and in a quest to ensure the best possible education for each child, the following opportunities are available for all families at our school.

AIMS

To provide opportunities for children of families experiencing financial hardship to participate in the full breadth of educational experiences as are enjoyed by all students.

IMPLEMENTATION

Note: The parent payment amounts and payment schedule can be seen at the end of the document.

- School Council supplements Department of Education and Training funds by requesting payments from parents for the following items:
 - **Essential Education Items** which parents and guardians are required to provide or pay the school to provide e.g.: stationary booklists, text books and uniforms etc.
 - **Optional Extras** which are offered on a user pays basis and parents can choose whether or not their child participates e.g.: instrumental music tuition or instrument hire, camps and excursions etc.
- In addition, School Council invites parents to make donations by means of:
 - **Voluntary Financial Contributions** which are non-compulsory donations for specific projects e.g.: library resources, grounds projects, technologies or equipment.
- Parents will be made aware of the costs associated with all payments and voluntary contributions six weeks prior to the due date along with a recommended payment schedule where possible.
- The Parent Payments schedule will include itemised details relating to all payments, an option to purchase goods elsewhere (where appropriate), essential payment dates, options to make payments by instalments, clear definitions of the category of any payments (i.e.: Essential, Optional or Voluntary)
- No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.
- Parents will be made aware of any government financial support schemes (e.g.: The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund - CSEF), and payments may be aligned with these benefits plus advice to parents to contact the principal if they require support or additional information.
- Council will provide opportunities for all parents experiencing financial difficulties to enter into alternative and confidential payment arrangements with the business manager or principal.
- A second-hand school uniform program is available, as well as the State School's Relief program for families in financial need.
- Katandra School will have alternative devices available which will provide students access to technology. These devices will be shared with other students will not be able to take the devices off the school grounds.
- School Council will also make available a modest annual discretionary budget that the

- principal may use to assist families experiencing financial hardship.
- All payments and non-payments by families, and participants in any school financial support programs will be strictly confidential.

EVALUATION

School Council will review the level and purpose of parent payments and voluntary contributions annually. In doing so, Council will also consider its financial support programs and any Departmental advice or instruction.

Note: in reflecting on the school's hardship arrangements, schools could consider their proactive strategies to engage with parents disconnected from the school who may be experiencing hardship, such as discretely approaching families who may need support and special payment arrangements.

Communication with Families

- Katandra School newsletter
- Katandra School website
- SENTRAL parent portal
- The opportunities available for parents to raise any issues, make general inquiries about charges, are to be referred to the principal and business manager in the main office, via the Katandra School website, by clicking on the hyperlink to our school email address, and or by phoning our main school phone number where questions can be referred

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY

The Katandra School Council is responsible to monitor the implementation of the policy, identifying the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents, how/when it will be reported back to the school community, and timing and processes of review.

REVIEW CYCLE

This Code of Conduct or Policy was endorsed/approved by the Katandra School Council on November 2020 for review if legislative or other changes require in the interim or no later than November 2022.

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| Date Implemented | November 2020 |
| Author | Rhett Watts |
| Approved By | School Council |
| Approval Authority (Signature & Date) | School Council President: Kellie Easton Signature Date |
| Date to be Reviewed | November 2022 |
| Responsible for Review | Rhett Watts, Barbara Pontikis |
| References | Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide |