

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Northern Bay College

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.

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.

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.
- 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

1. PURPOSE

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* provides for the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program, and empowers school councils to raise funds and charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction.

This policy covers payments for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions that Northern Bay P-12 College can request and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests are made.

2. BROAD GUIDELINES

Northern Bay College Council endeavours to keep charges to families to a minimum and has implemented a range of strategies to assist parents to meet the costs associated with schooling.

2.1. Essential Education Items These are items which parents/carer's 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:

- 2.1.1. materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and student stationery
- 2.1.2. materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, photography, catering)
- 2.1.3. school uniform (where applicable)
- 2.1.4. 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 school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions for home economics) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

2.2. 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:

- 2.2.1. instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program
- 2.2.2. extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music)
- 2.2.3. college organised performances, productions and events
- 2.2.4. For richer curriculum experiences materials/services required beyond standard curriculum program will require additional charges.
- 2.2.5. materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. graduation dinners, school photographs)
- 2.2.6. college facilities and equipment not associated with providing the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).

2.3. Voluntary Financial Contributions Parents/guardians, or anyone else, can be invited to make a donation to the school for the following purposes:

- 2.3.1. contributions to our building trust fund (this trust fund is approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)
- 2.3.2. general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. Payment arrangements and methods: Parents and carers will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions for the coming school year via the school booklist before the end of the school year. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

- Option A Full amount on Book Sale Day (start of Term 1)
- Option B Direct Debit Payments – fortnightly/monthly
- Option C BPay payments – fortnightly/monthly
- Option D Centrepay fortnightly payments

Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment. All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

Family support options

3.2. Payment Plan The College appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. Parents/Carers can organise a payment plan with the college Assistant Business Manager.

3.3. Support Agencies And Funds Northern Bay College has established partnerships with some welfare and support agencies that can provide assistance to students and their families with the costs of text books, uniforms and school shoes. Access to these supports is available through referral from your campus Learning Partner. Families generally require a current relevant Centrelink benefit card to access these supports. Please contact your campus office to make an appointment with the Learning Partner. The college is also registered with Centrelink to receive payments via their Centrepay system which is only available to holders of relevant current Centrelink benefit cards.

3.4. Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund (CSEF) The CSEF will provide payments for eligible students to support participation in camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply.

3.5. Consideration of Hardship Families experiencing financial difficulties due to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances are encouraged to speak to the Campus Leadership as arrangements can be made to assist the family. This can include, but is not limited to:

3.5.1. Waiving fees

3.5.2. Reduced fees

3.5.3. Deferred payment or the extension of payment deadlines

3.5.4. Flexible payment plans - beyond what is available in the college's standard policy. The college will also assist parents to obtain assistance through the many support agencies available to assist families with uniforms, school curriculum materials and finances.

3.6. Communication with Families Parents/Guardians will receive at least six weeks prior to the end of the year, a list of the required Essential Education Items and Optional Items which are relevant to their child's year level. Parents/Guardians will receive a Family Statements at the beginning of each term which will show all unpaid Essential Education Items and Optional Items.

4. EVALUATION

Monitoring and Review of the Implementation of the Policy - School Council is responsible for continued monitoring of the principles and processes used by the school to ensure that parent payment practices are adhered to. School Council will review the Parent Payment Policy annually.

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the college's review cycle.

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NBC003	Finance	October 2020		
	Related document			