



Cranbourne East Primary School

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 attached diagram "**Understanding Parent Payment Categories**" 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.

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](#)



Cranbourne East Primary School

2020 Parent Payment Policy

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 CHARGES

Essential Educational Items:

These are items which parents are required to provide or pay the school to provide for their child:

These items include:

- Student requisites required to be used by students. Supplies are purchased in bulk for each child and are specific to their year level. Requisites for each child are clearly outlined and itemised on the Year level booklist that is distributed to families. The cost of the student book pack is \$75.00 per child.
- Materials for learning and teaching where the students consumes or takes possession of the finalized articles. This incorporates supplies and resources for all key learning areas, including specialist areas such as Art & Craft Materials, ICT consumables, Science consumables, Literacy consumables, Café reading supplies and student Mathletics subscription. These items are purchased at competitive rates by the school through bulk orders. The cost to families for these items is \$105.00 per child for students in years preps to 6 and an extra \$10.00 for Prep students for a book bag.
- School Uniform – individual item costs can be found through PSW.

All essential educational items help to support and enrich the learning programs offered and implemented by the school.

If parents choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, and should meet the specifications provided by the school.

Optional extras:

These are programs that are offered on a user-pays basis which parents may choose to access for their child/ren.

These items include:

- Extra-curricular programs offered in addition to the standard curriculum program including, Camps for students in Years 3 -6, swimming program for students in Prep to Year 6, excursions, athletics, hoop time and lightning premiership offered to senior students.
- Items the student purchases or hires such as school magazines, class photos, fees for guest speakers, functions and graduation.
- While not an Essential Educational item, the activities/items offered by the school as optional extras further support the learning programs offered at the school and provide opportunities for students to experience a range of different activities.

Voluntary Financial Contributions:

Parents/Guardians are invited to donate funds to the school library and/or computer fund for an amount nominated by the parent/guardian. Monies donated to the school for these funds are spent on teaching and learning resources for student use in the library and in their learning spaces to further support and enrich the learning programs offered by the school.

Requests for voluntary financial contributions are limited to the initial notice to all parents and guardians and one reminder notice only.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

- Parent payments are to be kept to a minimum and charged at cost price.
- Communication with parents about education items including requests for payment is fair and reasonable.
- The school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.

- Parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees, that is, a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year. This enables parents to plan and budget accordingly.
- Payment requests must be accompanied by the following information:
 - Parent/guardians are required to provide essential education items for their students, and they have the option of purchasing these through the school or local supplier.
 - The availability of alternative payment options including payment plans and an invitation to contact the nominated school contact person if the parent wishes to discuss these options.
 - Details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the school.
- Parents will be provided with a reasonable amount of time to pay for essential educational items and are invited to pay in installments. A suggested installment plan will be provided with the payment request.
- Parents will be advised to contact the office if experiencing financial hardship.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

Alternative payment and support options will be made available and parents are invited to discuss the options with the nominated contact person at the school. A range of support options are available to parents, including:

- The **Camps, Sports and Excursion fund (CSEF)** supports families who meet eligibility criteria set by the Victorian Government to ensure the student has the opportunity to participate in important, educational activities.
- The **State Schools Relief Committee** support, applications can be made via the Principal to assist with clothing/uniforms.
- The Prep Uniform Voucher entitles families of Prep students who meet eligibility criteria set by the Victorian Government to a uniform voucher.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. Consideration of hardship arrangements and concessions will be provided for families who are experiencing chronic long term financial hardship or short term crises on a case-by-case basis.

For parents willing to contribute but limited in their ability to, the parent payment contact person will use their discretion and act within the mandate of the policy and guiding principles to negotiate appropriate forms of payment assistance.

Where possible, the school may offer to reduce the amount or alter the timelines of requested parent payments. This may include:

- Waiving fees
- Reducing fees
- Deferred payment or the extension of payment deadlines
- Flexible payment plans- beyond what is available in the school's standard policy
- Families experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to contact Faye Hanks by phone on (03) 5990 0400 or contact the school office to arrange a meeting at the school to discuss financial situation and related difficulties in making payments.
- Parents/Guardians may be required to provide a valid means-tested concession card and/or the receipt of Centrelink benefits or allowances.

Parents experiencing hardship who approach the school can expect to:

- Be treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement.
- Have their circumstances individually considered.
- Have their identity and circumstances kept confidential to the relevant school personnel
- Nominate a support person to accompany them to any meetings with parent payment contact persons.
- Receive prompt information on the support options available and government assistance programs.
- Discuss the amount they can afford and negotiate the terms of payment
- Revisit their payment plan at any point during the school year
- Receive free access to a language interpreter service if required

Parents who engage with the school to discuss hardship should be encouraged to:

- Advise the school of their financial difficulties as soon as possible
- Act reasonably in their negotiations with parent Payment contact person and school staff in pursuit of a mutually acceptable outcome.
- Be honest and realistic in their assessment of their capacity to contribute to their child's education.
- Advise their Parent Payment contact person if their circumstances change as soon as practicable
- Maintain contact with the Parent Payment contact person if this is required.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The Parent Payment policy and implementation will be communicated with the school community via the schools website.

Parents are invited to contact the school office to discuss any issues, complaints or general inquiries about charges.

Students are provided with a hard copy of the book list and receive reminders via text message and in the school's newsletter.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

It is the responsibility of the school council to monitor the implementation of the parent payment policy, identify 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.

The parent payments policy is to be reviewed annually.

Date of approval by School Council

25.03.2020