



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 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.

Principles of this policy:

- **Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when we 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

Guidelines for Implementation

Parent Payment Charges

Parents can be asked to pay for items, activities and services in the three Parent Payment Categories.

1. Essential Student Learning Items

These are items or services that the school deems essential to student learning of the standard curriculum. Parents and guardians are responsible to pay for such essential items and the school to provide them.

These items include:

- materials that the student takes possession of,(temporary or permanent) including text books and student stationery

- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. Art projects)
- transport, entrance and the use of equipment or resources for excursions and incursions which all students are expected to attend.

2. Optional Items

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 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:

- instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. student computer printing for personal use)
- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music)
- school-based performances, productions and events
- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (e.g. the use of more expensive materials)
- materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school magazines)
- school facilities and equipment not associated with providing the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).

3. Voluntary Financial Contributions are for those items and services that parents and guardians are invited to make a donation to the school and are vital in enabling the school to meet parents and students expectations of resources and facilities for the following purposes:

- School nurse (covers employment of a highly qualified, fully registered nurse to provide student first aid, staff & community health education, OHS & liaising with different health bodies)
- ICT/STEM/Curriculum levy (general voluntary financial contributions to the school - covers inquiry unit software, purchase and maintenance of hardware, digital learning devices, support for our Specialist areas of Art, LOTE, Performing Arts, PE)
- Grounds Levy (general voluntary financial contributions to the school towards grounds maintenance in lieu of attending working bees throughout the year)
- Building Fund/Library Fund (contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund which are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible).

Payment arrangements and methods

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

Payments are kept to a minimum with payment requests and letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

Option A	Full amount
Option B	Payment at the beginning of each Semester
Option C	Three payments (beginning of Terms 1,2 & 3)
Option D	Other, payment arrangements

Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

Payment requests or letters to parents will be itemised and the category each items falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.

Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.

Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.

Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued to parents and guardians.

All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

Parent payment options are available to all families including an instalment plan over the course of four terms. Arrangement for an instalment plan should be made in writing to the Principal or Business Manager.

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, Excursions Fund (CSEF)*, *Schoolkids Bonus*, *State Schools Relief Committee support and welfare* and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.

Camps, Sports, Excursions Fund (CSEF)

The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) will run over four years and provide payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply. \$125 per year will be paid for eligible primary school students, with \$225 per year paid for eligible secondary school students. Payments will go directly to the school and be tied to the student.

Refunds

Our school will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally we will not be able to refund payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment.

Communication with Families

The Parent Payment Policy will be published on the school's website, and will also be distributed to families each year along with the annual payment request. General enquiries regarding parent charges may be made to the school office on 9484 3949. Concerns should be directed to the Principal (Christian Woodcock).

Monitoring and review of the implementation of the policy

Wales Street Primary School Council 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 council.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually.