

STUDENT CHARGES POLICY

RATIONALE:

The Education & Training Reform Act 2006 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. As the quality and variety of educational programs offered by our school are enhanced by doing so, our School Council requests payment from parents for certain student materials and services charges. These are further set out in the DEECD Parent Payment in Schools Policy 2008.

AIMS:

To provide high quality learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing limited government funds with approved financial contributions and payments from parents.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The following describes the three parent payment categories that school councils can request payments from parents.

Essential education items

These are items which parents/guardians pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program and include:

- materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as 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, photography, catering)
- school uniform (where applicable)
- 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.

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:

- 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).

Voluntary financial contributions

Parents/guardians, or anyone else, can make a donation to the school for the following purposes:

- contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers or student-related services
- voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school. (Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)

- Parents shall be made aware of the costs associated with all payments and voluntary contributions no later than the end of November previous year, along with a recommended payments schedule. Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
- The payments schedule shall include itemised details relating to all payments, essential payment dates, options to make payments by instalments, clear definitions of the category of any payments ie: Essential or Optional), and advice to parents to contact the principal if they require support or additional information.
- All costs and processes associated with parent payments shall be kept to a minimum, will be defensible in relation to DEECD requirements, and will be within the expectations of the school community.
- All payments and non-payments will be strictly confidential. The public identification of students or their parents where payments have or have not been received will not occur.
- All administration and financial processing are compliant with DEECD requirements and receipts shall be issued to parents immediately upon payment and receipted on CASES 21.
- The school shall not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories
- Students shall 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 needs to be provided.

- Invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month.
- No collectors of any type, including debt collectors, will be used to obtain funds from parents or students.
- The school shall not use coercion or harass parents/guardians to obtain payment.

Communication:

Payment requests, Parent Payment Agreement document, letters or CASES21 invoices for student materials and services charges shall be accompanied by the following information:

- a description of each of the two parent payment categories
- details of what parents are being asked to pay for
- that parents are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier, where appropriate
- the availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the principal if the parent wishes to discuss these
- a copy of this policy.

The Principal, as the executive officer of the school council, shall ensure that this school-level policy complies with the Department’s policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed on an *annual* basis. School Council will review the parent payments schedule annually and in doing so will be consistent with any advice or instruction received from DEECD.

For additional information please refer to

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/pages/parentpayments.aspx>

and

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx>.

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s annual review cycle

This policy was last ratified by school Council: (date)