



PARENT PAYMENTS POLICY

Purpose

This policy outlines the ways in which our School council can request payments or voluntary contributions from parents and ensure that parent payment practices in our school are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

Summary

- All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the curriculum requirements in the eight key learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).
- School Councils can only request payments from parents under 3 categories: Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Contributions.
- Schools must consider the [Financial Help for Families Policy](#) and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments.
- Schools must have their parent payment arrangements approved by their school council and uploaded onto their public websites.
- Schools cannot:
 - deny students access to the standard curriculum program, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments not being made for education items or activities
 - request payments from parents for school operating costs (for example, utility costs) or general and unspecified charges (for example, subject levies)

Policy

Free instruction

All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in the 8 key learning areas:

1. English
2. Mathematics
3. Sciences (including physics, chemistry and biology)
4. Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
5. The arts
6. Languages
7. Health and physical education
8. Information and communication technology and design and technology.

Free instruction includes 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.

Schools cannot deny students access to the standard curriculum program, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments not being made for education items or activities. Schools cannot withhold student access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payments being made.

Parent payment categories

School Councils can only request payments from parents under 3 categories:

1. Essential Student Learning Items

Essential Student Learning Items are items and activities which the school deems as essential for student learning, without which, students would be unable to access the school's delivery of the standard curriculum.

Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase essential items through the school or provide their own. Where a child cannot provide an essential student learning item or participate in an essential activity, the school must make alternative arrangements e.g. make the item available through the school or provide alternative financial support options.

Essential Student Learning Items do not include:

- school operating costs (refer to School operating costs in the [Guidance](#) tab)
- generic subject levies or fees
- non-curriculum related costs
- unspecified charges

Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity has been categorised as an Essential Student Learning Item.

2. Optional Items

Optional Items are items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students access these on a user pays basis.

Optional Items include non-curriculum-based school events, optional excursions and camps, optional sporting or music programs and materials that don't relate to the standard curriculum such as school magazines.



3. Voluntary Contributions

School Councils can invite parents to make a voluntary contribution to support the school. Voluntary Contributions can be for general or clearly explained specific purposes that relate to the School Council's functions and objectives. Where a Voluntary Contribution is requested for a specific purpose, the funds may only be used for that purpose. There are no obligations on parents to make any Voluntary Contributions and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the standard curriculum if their parents do not contribute.

Financial help for families

Schools have a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents who may be experiencing either short-term or long-term financial hardship.

Schools must:

- ensure costs to parents are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families
- consider the Financial Help for Families Policy and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments for their child
- nominate a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with parent payment arrangements

Refer to [Financial Help for Families](#) for further information.

School's parent payment arrangements

Schools do not need to develop their own school-level Parent Payment Policy. However, schools should develop their own parent payment arrangements that suit their local context. Parent payment arrangements include the school's:

- payment requests to parents for items and activities. Items and activities must be clearly specified, accurately costed and itemised using the 3 categories
- financial support options for parents experiencing financial hardship
- payment methods

Schools must:

- have their parent payment arrangements approved by their School Council prior to communicating it to parents
- upload their parent payment arrangements onto their school website for transparency (refer to Uploading parent payment arrangements onto the school website in the [Guidance](#) tab)

Schools must use the [Parent Payment Arrangements Template](#) to develop arrangements and communicate these to parents



DET Policy



The following is a summary of the main principles of the Parent Payments Policy:



FREE INSTRUCTION

- Schools provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements as outlined in the Victorian Curriculum F-10, VCE and VCAL.



PARENT PAYMENT REQUESTS

- Schools do not ask parents to pay for school operating costs (e.g. utility costs) or general and unspecified charges.
- Schools request payments from parents under three categories:

Essential Student Learning Items

- Items and activities which the school deems essential for student learning.
- Parents may choose to purchase essential items through the school or provide their own.

Optional Items

- Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum.
- These are provided to students on a user-pays basis.

Voluntary Contributions

- Voluntary contributions support the school to continue to be the best local school for all students and can be for general or specific purpose.
- Students will not be disadvantaged in any way if parents do not make a contribution.



FINANCIAL HELP FOR FAMILIES

- Schools put in place financial hardship arrangements to support families who cannot pay for items or activities so that their child doesn't miss out.
- Schools have a nominated parent payment contact person that parents can have a confidential discussion with regarding financial hardship arrangements.



SCHOOL PROCESSES

- Schools obtain school council approval for their parent payment arrangements and upload their arrangements on their school's public website for transparency.



SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT CHECKLIST



This is a checklist to ensure Manchester Primary School complies with the Parent Payment Policy.



FREE INSTRUCTION

- All students have free access to instruction as part of the delivery of the standard curriculum.
- Students are not denied access to the standard curriculum or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made.



PARENT PAYMENT REQUESTS

- All parent payment requests for items and activities are accurately costed and itemised under the three parent payment categories:
 - Essential Student Learning Items
 - Optional Items
 - Voluntary Contributions.
- Parents have not been asked to pay for school operating costs (e.g. utility costs) and general or unspecified charges (e.g. subject levies).

Refer to school operating costs in the Guidance section of the [Parent Payments Policy](#) for more information.



FINANCIAL HELP FOR FAMILIES

- Arrangements have been made for families experiencing financial hardship and have been clearly communicated along with the school's parent payment requests.
- A parent payment contact person(s) has been nominated to support families with financial hardship arrangements.

Refer to the [Financial Help for Families](#) policy for more information.



SCHOOL PROCESSES

- Schools are no longer required to develop their own school-level parent payment policy but must develop their own parent payment arrangements that comply with the Department's Parent Payment Policy.
- School council has approved the school's parent payment arrangements.
- The school's parent payment arrangements (including fee schedules for each year level) have been uploaded to the school's public website for transparency.
- The school's parent payment arrangements have been communicated to parents at least six weeks prior to the end of the school year to enable parents to plan and budget accordingly.

Schools must use the [Parent Payment Arrangements Template](#) to develop their parent payment arrangements, have them approved by school council and communicate to parents.



Further Information and Resources

DET – PAL - Policy Advisory Library Resources

- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/guidance>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/resources>
- [Parent Payments Policy — One Page Overview](#)
- [Parent Payment Arrangements Template](#)
- [Implementation Support Checklist](#)

- [Finance Manual — Financial Management for Schools](#)
- [Financial Help for Families](#)
- [Personal Devices — Access](#)
- [School Council — Powers and Functions](#)
- [Student Dress Code](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)

Relevant legislation

- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Education Training and Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)

Parent Payments Policy Review

Note: All information gathered in this policy has been retrieved from the DET PAL - School Operations Parent Payments - DET Reviewed 17 August 2020

As stipulated, Manchester Primary will follow The Department's Parent Payments Policy as outlined.

This policy was last updated on:

Date: February 2022

Evaluation and Review: February 2023

Ratified and Approved by School Council:

Meeting # 502