



# Parent Payment Policy

## 2.8 Policy

### **Rationale:**

- Schools must provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the requirements of the Curriculum.
- Schools may request parents make voluntary financial contributions towards the cost of schooling under 2 categories: Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions.
- Schools may invite parents to purchase optional Extra-Curricular Items and Activities on a user-pays basis.
- Schools may invite parents to supply or purchase their own educational items for their child to use and to own.
- Schools must apply the Financial Help for Families policy when implementing the Parent Payments policy.
- Schools must follow the requirements on finance and communications set out in the Guidance tab.

### **Details:**

#### **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.

9. All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the requirements of the Victorian Curriculum F–10, Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (Curriculum).
10. Free instruction includes the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the Curriculum, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.
11. Schools must ensure that students have free access to items and activities as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. The extent and frequency of access that students require depends on the school's context and their approach to delivering the Curriculum.
12. Schools are not required to provide students with items to own, or keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant items for the duration required to access the Curriculum.
13. Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or disadvantage students on the basis of financial contributions and payments not being made. Schools cannot deny students access to the Curriculum by withholding enrolment or advancement to the next year level on the basis of payments and financial contributions not being made.

### **Principles of voluntary financial contributions**

Schools seeking a parent payment must adhere to the following principles of voluntary financial contributions:

- the school council should clearly explain how contributions will be spent when making a request for a contribution
- each contribution is to be voluntary and obtained without coercion or harassment
- a student at the school is not to be refused instruction in the Curriculum because their parents do not make a contribution
- a student is not to be approached, coerced or harassed for contributions
- any record of contributions is confidential, as is any decision by a parent not to make a financial contribution.

**School councils may request parents to make voluntary financial contributions and payments to the school under the following categories.**

**Parent payment categories**

School councils may request parents make voluntary financial contributions and payments to the school under the following categories. There are no obligations on parents to make any voluntary financial contributions and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if their parents do not contribute.

***Curriculum Contributions***

Curriculum Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum. Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity has been categorised as necessary to the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

***Other Contributions***

Other Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives. They can be requested for a broad area of school need or itemised for a clearly explained specific purpose.

***Extra-Curricular Items and Activities***

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are provided on a user-pays basis. They include optional excursions and camps, optional sporting or music programs, and materials that don't relate to the Curriculum such as school magazines.

**Purchase of educational items for students to own.**

Schools can invite parents to bring from home, purchase, or lease educational items directly from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school. Educational items for students to own include items that have a specific curriculum purpose and for which students take individual possession. When inviting parents to purchase or lease educational items to own directly from a third-party provider, the school may include a list of recommended items or specifications.

Schools cannot communicate to families that parents must purchase educational items for students to own from third parties. If a parent does not provide or purchase educational items, the school must ensure that the student has free access to items as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. Schools are not required to provide students with items to own, or

keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant items for the duration required to access the Curriculum.

Educational items for students to own can include:

- textbooks (paper or digital versions)
- stationery
- calculators
- digital devices
- fitted safety equipment (safety boots, closed shoes).

Educational items for students to own must not include:

- items not directly related to curriculum-based learning
- classroom consumables (including class materials such as food ingredients or art supplies that contribute to finished products that students take home)
- items that students do not take individual possession of (for example, class sets of devices, sports equipment, whole-school subscriptions)
- items that are developed and produced by the school (for example, school-developed workbooks, school-developed exam papers)
- activities or services (for example, camps, excursions, events, device repair costs).

### **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.

## **Implementing the policy in schools**

Schools develop their parent payment arrangements to suit the contextual needs and aspirations of their school community while ensuring their arrangements remain in alignment with this policy.

### **School's parent payment arrangements must:**

- support the functions and objectives of the school, including the enhancement of student learning, access, equity, inclusion and wellbeing
- ensure costs to parents are kept to a minimum, affordable for families, and proportionate to the needs of the school
- follow the finance requirements set out in the guidance
- follow the communication requirements set out in the guidance
- use the templates provided by the Department to create and communicate their parent payment arrangements
- follow all monitoring and compliance requirements as directed by the Department.

### **School's must not:**

- have parent payment arrangements that are inconsistent with the above requirements
- undertake debt recovery activities for any payments or contributions
- have a localized Parent Payments policy
- use terms, such as fees, charges or levies, that suggest or communicate that contributions are compulsory
- have parent payment arrangements that request payments for:
  - teacher professional learning
  - the provision of gifts, benefits or hospitality to school staff or school council members
  - items or activities that schools receive full funding for such as electricity, standard internet access and department provided administrative software
  - administrative costs such as merchant fees associated with electronic payment transactions, sending text messages or letters to parents

### **Relevant legislation**

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

