

BELMONT PRIMARY SCHOOL

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY



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 (page 4) "**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 the DET document: ["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 and report back to the school community.

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](#)

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

SCHOOL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Belmont Primary School has spent considerable time selecting the most appropriate requisites to meet the needs of our students. Student requisites contain high quality materials at a competitive price due to our ability to bulk order. We ensure that costs are kept to a minimum and that all materials are carefully selected to support and enhance the high level teaching and learning programs throughout the school. Belmont Primary School requests payments from Parents/Carers under the following categories only:

Essential Education Items are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. At Belmont Primary School, essential items include:

• Materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery. These include individual materials that are packed and provided to each individual student. Items vary per year level.	Cost:	\$45
• Shared materials that are provided for students to use daily and are purchased in bulk and distributed to students when required in class. Items vary between years levels.	Cost:	\$60
• Subject Resource Contributions are the items bought in bulk to support specialised programs such as Art, Italian, PE, Integrated Studies, Sound Waves and Values education.	Cost:	\$75
• School iPad Requirements: Students in Grades 3-6 using school iPads are charged a small fee to cater for ongoing maintenance, software and application updates.	Cost:	\$20
Total Costs:		\$180-\$200

Voluntary financial contributions are those items and services under which parents are invited to make a donation to the School, for example for grounds maintenance or building trust. Belmont Primary School invites parents and carers to make a voluntary contribution to the Garden & Maintenance fund (\$30 per family). Families are also welcome to make a voluntary contribution to the school, nominating their preferred amount.

Optional education items can also be referred to as non-essential materials and services. These items are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for each item as they are required throughout the school year. These items can include:

- Extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, choir
- School-based performances, productions and events
- Excursions and incursions
- Additional school items such as student/ class photographs, school magazine
- Before and after school care.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

- Parents will be provided with early notice of payment request for essential education items, optional items and voluntary financial contributions with a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year.
- Belmont Primary School accepts the following payment methods - Cash, cheque, BPay or EFTPOS.
- The school offers three payment options to assist parents with payments. These include
 - Pre-payment in November and December of the current year.
 - Full payment by the beginning of Term 1 of the upcoming school year.
 - Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents/carers encouraged to make contact with the Principal or School Business Manager to establish a payment plan that meets the needs of the family.
- We request that parents/carers return the completed Student Requisites and Parent Contributions Form at the time of payment.

REFUND POLICY

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.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

At Belmont we appreciate 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 and Excursion fund (CSEF)** supports families who met eligibility criteria set by the Victorian Government to ensure the student has the opportunity to participate in important, educational and fun activities.
- The **State Schools Relief Committee** support, applications can be made via the Principal to assist with clothing/uniforms
- **Welfare and support agencies** that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.
- No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

At times, families may experience circumstances that prevent them from participating fully in school life. At Belmont we believe that it is important that every support is provided to ensure all can access and participate in learning experiences at school. The Business Manager (Jacqui Eddy) and the Principal (David Houghton) are the contacts for parent payment inquiries. Parents may make contact by telephone, email, in writing or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments. The school contacts will use discretion and negotiate appropriate forms of payment assistance.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- The school's Parent Payment Policy is available on the school website under the *Our School/Policies* section.
- Hard copies will be made available for collection from the office staff.
- The policy will be provided to all prep families in Term 4.
- Key aspects of the Parent Payment Policy will be included in the information provided to parents with the student requisites list each year.
- Parents/Carers have the opportunity to make general inquiries about charges at the general office between the hours of 9am until 4pm. Any issues can be raised via phone, email or by making a time to meet with the Business Manager, Jacqui Eddy or Principal, David Houghton.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- The Department of Education and Belmont Primary School are committed to ongoing improvement and ensuring that the impact of policies and practices on students are assessed in an ongoing way.
- School Council have a key role in ensuring the school level approach to parent payments reflects the shared expectations of the whole school community and is therefore responsible of monitoring effectiveness and the impact on parents/carers and students. The factors/measures that will be taken into account are the; transparency of processes, engagement with parents and how/when it will be reported back to the school community.
- Implementation of the Parent Payment Policy and school practice will be reviewed at least annually.

RESOURCES

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Sections 2.2.4(1), 2.3.6 (1)(c), 2.2.

Department of Education and Training *School Policy and Advisory Guide*

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

EVALUATION

This policy is required to be reviewed annually by School Council to confirm/enhance internal control procedures.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in.....

November 2018

Review Date: Term 4 2019