

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Mooroolbark College

### **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.

### **PARENT PAYMENT CATEGORIES**

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

#### ***Curriculum Contributions***

Curriculum Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether an item or activity is necessary for delivering the Curriculum. Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity is necessary to the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny student access to items or activities on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Each student must have the same access to curriculum items or activities regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools must provide a clear description of the item or activity when requesting Curriculum Contributions and allocate funds for the purposes for which they were requested. Schools do not need to itemise each individual item when requesting Curriculum Contributions.

### ***Other Contributions***

Other Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or disadvantage them in any way on the basis of Other Contributions not being made.

Other Contributions can be requested for a broad area of school need or a specific, clearly described purpose that relates to the school's functions and objectives. Schools must allocate funds raised from Other Contributions for the purposes for which they were requested.

### ***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 additional to those provided by the school at no cost to deliver the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether an item or activity is extra-curricular.

An item or activity can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard activity available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Items or activities provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning; however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities can include optional:

- alternative forms of instruction
- non-curriculum-based school events (graduation)
- non-curriculum items (school magazines, yearbooks)
- excursions and camps
- sporting programs
- music programs
- out of school hours care
- items and materials that are linked to the Curriculum but are additional to or outside what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must not include:

- items, activities and services that are required to fulfil the Curriculum
- educational items such as headphones, stationery packs, digital devices, textbooks (including digital textbooks), calculators
- general enrolment fees
- subject enrolment fees (including VET courses and subjects defined by the school as 'elective')
- the hire, lease, or lease-to-own of school owned digital devices.

Schools should ensure the costs of Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families. Schools must apply the Financial Help for Families policy in relation to Extra-Curricular Items and Activities to support families experiencing financial hardship.

## 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 curriculum contributions (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 debt 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 unpaid curriculum contributions and voluntary financial contributions per year

## **FINANCIAL HELP FOR FAMILIES**

While all contributions are voluntary, schools must prepare for and support families experiencing financial hardship to facilitate student participation in the full school program (for example, purchasing Extra-Curricular Items and Activities and educational items for students to own).

Schools must:

- apply the Financial Help for Families policy to parent payment arrangements
- nominate a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with financial help arrangements and support programs.

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

## **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 using the Parent Payment Arrangements Template available on the school website.

## **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 [Policy and Advisory Library](#).

# PARENT PAYMENTS POLICY

## CATEGORISATION OF PARENT PAYMENT REQUESTS – SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The information below is to be used as a reference guide for schools when deciding upon which category a parent payment item should be listed on the [Parent Payment Letter Template](#). The list covers a wide range of potential items and activities that should only be listed by schools when they have a demonstrated need related to their school goals. Further information regarding how schools can request parent payments can be found at [www.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/policy](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/policy).

Schools can request contributions from parents under three categories

### Curriculum Contributions

Voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum.

- **General classroom materials and equipment** (e.g. shared classroom stationery, paper, posters/charts)
- **Subject specific materials and equipment** (e.g. materials for English, Mathematics, Language, Science, Art, Music, Technology, Food Technology, Health and Physical Education)
- **Provision and upkeep of school devices, peripherals and ICT** (e.g. devices owned by the school, class sets, device configuration, maintenance, and server/system costs)
- **Photocopying and printing for students** (e.g. printed workbooks in lieu of textbooks)
- **Curriculum activities** (e.g. excursions, incursions, camps, whole-school carnivals - including transport and entry)
- **Digital and online subscriptions for learning**
- **Assessments** (e.g. standardised tests, revision packages, external examinations)
- **Student ID cards**
- **Student planners**

### Other Contributions

Voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives.

- **Sports affiliation costs** (e.g. School Sports Victoria affiliation)
- **Student and parent communication tools**
- **Enhanced student support** (e.g. learning support programs, mentoring, coaching, tutoring, homework clubs, language conversation clubs)
- **Enhanced wellbeing support** (e.g. wellbeing programs, school counsellors, mental health practitioners)
- **Lockers/locker maintenance**
- **Engaging staff through local payroll** (e.g. groundskeepers, coaches, additional wellbeing and learning support staff)
- **School buildings and grounds maintenance and enhancement** (e.g. Building Fund)
- **Library maintenance and enhancement** (e.g. Library Fund)
- **Use and upkeep of specialised facilities on campuses** (e.g. gym equipment, recording studio)
- **First aid and hygiene costs**

### Extra-Curricular Items and Activities

Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum. These are provided on a user-pays basis.

- **Optional items to keep** (e.g. yearbook, school photos, recording of school concert)
- **Optional Extra-Curricular Activities - school based** (e.g. camps, excursions, incursions, guest speakers, sport carnivals and events)
- **Optional Extra-Curricular Activities - outside of school hours** (e.g. formal, dance, social, graduation, award ceremonies)
- **Use of specialised school facilities after hours** (e.g. use of gym facilities)
- **Optional items within subjects** (e.g. students wanting to use mahogany wood and silver for Technology in lieu of the school's standard timber and metal)
- **Optional experiences within subjects** (e.g. Outdoor Education camp, science excursion)
- **Alternative curriculum programs** (e.g. Montessori, Steiner, Language Immersion, International Baccalaureate Diploma)
- **Private instrumental music lessons and instrument hire**
- **Entry into academic competitions**

- Schools may also invite parents to supply or purchase educational items to use and own. These items are sold by third party providers and can include **booklist items, textbooks, stationery, digital devices and peripherals, calculators, locks and fitted personal safety equipment**. If a student does not provide or purchase their own educational items, the school must ensure the student has free access to what is needed at school to access the school's delivery of the Curriculum

Mooroolbark College

# Parent Payment Policy

## PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Cash

EFT

BPay

Compass Pay

- *Mooroolbark College school council will approve in writing the school council's decision for the utilisation of Compass Pay.*
- *Payments made via Compass Pay are to be receipted in CASES21 as per the Transfer Information report which is available on Compass Pay daily.*
- *The rapid receipting feature can be used to auto upload the Compass Pay batch to CASES21 for allocation.*

## Recurring Contributions

- *Parents are invited to create a recurring contribution through Compass.*
- *Parents may choose to pay in instalments of 2, 4, 8 or make payment of College Contributions in full.*
- *Cardholder of recurring contributions which decline on the designated installment date, will be will receive automatic email notification from Compass and urged to contact the College to update their card details and arrange a date to re-queue the payment sweep which is suitable to the school and card holder.*

## FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

- *Second hand and low cost options e.g. school clothing pool, low cost suppliers*
- *CSEF*
- *State Schools Relief*
- *Local community supports*

## CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Parents experiencing financial hardship can communicate with by phone, email or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments include Mooroolbark College Accounts Team and Student Wellbeing Leader.

## COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Parent Payment Arrangement templates and the Parent Payment Policy are made available on the College website. Parents wishing to raise any issues, make general inquiries about payment arrangements are invited to contact the Principal or the Accounts Department at the College.

## REFUNDS

Refunds should be worked out on a case by case basis at the local school level and schools have the discretion to provide refunds to families and should do so where it is reasonable and fair (for example, if the school has not incurred a cost).

If the school has incurred costs, the school should act reasonably and take into consideration the Financial Help for Families Policy and relevant arrangements, including support for families experiencing hardship. For example, schools should consider refunding families for unavoidable event cancellations if a family experiences a crisis or sudden serious illness and the student can no longer attend the event.

If the school decides to provide a refund, then parents need to agree and advise the school where the refund should be paid. If that agreement cannot be reached, the refund is usually paid into the account from which the money came. Where the payment was made in cash, the school should wait until the parents reach an agreement and advise the school.

**Review process- 1 year**

**Date of approval by School Council - 25/6/2024**