

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## HAMLYN VIEWS SCHOOL

### 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 parents<sup>1</sup> 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 "**Understanding Parent Payment Categories**" provides examples of items and materials under each category.

In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following principles:

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## 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 [“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.

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](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

Schools can invite **Voluntary Financial Contributions** for



#### 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
- campus, 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

- e.g.
- Building or Library fund (Tax deductible)
- Voluntary contributions for a specific purpose, such as equipment, materials, services.
- General voluntary contributions

# HAMLYN VIEWS SCHOOL

## Parent Payment Policy

### PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Hamlyn Views School requests payment from Parents/Carers under the following three categories only:

**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. These include:

- items which students take possession of, including text books and student stationery,
- materials for learning and teaching where your child consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (for example cooking, materials for final products that students take home)
- travel costs, entry fees and accommodation costs for activities associated with instruction in the standard curriculum program eg. excursions and incursions which all students are expected to attend.

**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. These items include:

- instructional supports, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program (for example, student computer printing for personal use and internet access for recreational or non-school use).
- entry fees for school run performances, productions and events
- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials or services required for the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (for example, requesting payment for the use of mahogany in woodwork instead of the standard pine)
- materials and services offered in addition to the 'standard curriculum program' (for example, school magazines or school photographs)
- school facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the 'standard curriculum program', and not otherwise provided for through the School Resources Package (for example, student accident insurance, and hire/lease of equipment such as notebook computers).

### Voluntary Financial Contributions

Parents, or anyone else, can be invited to make a voluntary contribution or 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. These contributions are NOT tax deductible.
- general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school. These contributions or donations are NOT tax deductible.
- donations to a building fund or library fund (if these funds have been endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office and have a Deductible Gift Recipients (DGR) status). Donations to these funds ARE tax deductible to the donor.
- any donations to special schools with a DGR status are also tax deductible to the donor.

All payment requests made under the above categories are intended to support and enrich the school's learning and teaching programs.

### PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Hamlyn Views School accepts the following payment methods:

- **Cash or cheques** directly to the office or in an envelope to the class teacher

- **BPAY** – payment directly to school by using your BPay Biller Code and Reference No. found on your family statement
- **Direct Deposit** – set up a once off or regular direct deposit from your bank account to the school account
- **Centrelink** - the school is registered with Centrelink to receive payments from families via their Centrepay system which is only available to holders of relevant current Centrelink benefit cards

A range of support options are available to assist parents, and they can organise a payment plan with the Business Manager.

## **FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS**

Staff will be proactive in engaging with parents disconnected from the school who may be experiencing hardship. These families will be referred to the Business Manager or Wellbeing staff and be discreetly approached when needing support and special payment arrangements.

Support is also available in the form of:

- **CSEF** – Camps, Sports & Excursions fund will run until Dec 2018 and provide payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply.
- **State Schools Relief** – may cover the cost of new school uniforms and shoes for disadvantaged students. State Schools Relief only responds to requests from school principals, assistant principals or welfare coordinators. Parents or Carers who are struggling need to make an appointment with the school to discuss their situation.

## **COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

- **Saver Plus** is an initiative of Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ, delivered locally by community organisations in 22 locations in Victoria. Saver Plus assists individuals and families on lower incomes to have every dollar up to \$500 saved over a 10-month period matched by ANZ to go towards education-related costs.
- **The Smith Family's 'Learning for Life program'** provides financial support, guidance and mentoring for disadvantaged students. The Smith Family works with a select number of schools and may require referral from the school principal.
- **Travellers Aid Australia's Pathways to Education program** provides student travel passes to young people experiencing financial difficulties, enabling them to travel to school or other forms of training and education. The program is limited to students who attend secondary education in an alternative setting, namely community schools and secondary education at a tertiary institution.
- **Good Shepherd Microfinance** provides affordable financial programs for people on low or limited incomes that may assist families to afford educational costs and other expenses. The **No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)** provides access to fair and safe credit (up to \$1,200) for the purchase of essential goods and services delivered through a network of local community organisations in 650 locations across Australia, including through Financial Counselling Victoria and Travellers Aid. Uniting Care Geelong is the local administrator of Good Shepherd Microfinance.

## **CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP**

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties due to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. Families who find themselves in this category are encouraged to speak to the Business Manager, Carolyn Haskett on 5215 5700, as arrangements can be made to assist the family.

If possible, the school will offer to assist the families in the following ways:

- Reduction of fees
- Flexible payment plans
- Donations

- Sourcing 2<sup>nd</sup> hand items

The school will support parents to obtain assistance through the many support agencies available with uniforms, school curriculum materials and finances.

The Wellbeing staff member, Michele Marcu is also available to assist families and students.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

- This policy and the school's implementation will be communicated with the school community through advertising prominently on the school website, including the policy with payment information and the school will ensure hard copies are available in the office foyer.
- Parents and Carers will receive a letter prior to commencement of the first term of school with details of all their student's Essential Education costs and any Optional items for the year ie. Camps, swimming, excursions and incursions.
- Parents and Carers will receive a family statement each term detailing unpaid Essential Education and Optional items.
- Parents and Carers have the opportunity to make general enquiries about charges at the school office between the hours of 8.30am and 4.00pm. Any issues can be raised via phone, email or by making a time to meet with the Business Manager.

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

School Council is responsible for continued monitoring and the implementation of the policy. This policy will be reviewed annually to identify any further factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents.

**Date of approval by School Council**

**14<sup>th</sup> November 2018**