



Parent / Guardian 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 for all students in government schools. The school council is responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents 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.



In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following 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 the school council consider the proposed requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

The school Principal must ensure that:

- items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- payment requests are broadly itemized 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. The Principal and school council will 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.”**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/searchcentre/pages/results.aspx?k=cost%20support%20for%20families#k=cost%20support%20for%20families>

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. Parents can contact either the Principal or the Business Manager at the school, who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

Review of policy implementation

The school 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.

Parent Payment Charges

- **Essential Student Learning Items** – Parents are required to pay for (or provide where appropriate) the essential education items used by their children each year. The charge covers the costs of workbooks, photocopied workbooks, stationery, consumables and additional specialty supplies for Visual Arts, Science, Japanese, Inquiry, student cooking and other instructional supports to add to or enhance the standard curriculum. Our school provides the service of bulk stationery to ensure all children have the correct and necessary books, pens, pencils, crayons, and diaries etc. for the school year. The supplies are of high quality and are suitable for use in a primary school setting. Because everything is purchased in bulk, we are able to provide the items at a reduced rate.
- **Optional Education Items** – Berwick Chase Primary School also offers a range of optional extras for which the parents are expected to pay if they wish their children to attend or receive. These items include travel and entry costs for visiting performances, excursions and camps, school photos, private music tuition, and Graduation activities.

Throughout the year, students will also be encouraged to take part in excursions and sporting activities. This includes camps for Years 3/4 and 5/6, and programs such as swimming programs for all year levels.

Voluntary Financial Contributions - Our School Council asks for you to consider donating to the following:

- **Library Fund Donation:** These donations are used for the purchase of new and relevant library books for your child to borrow and enjoy. BCPS has a strong and vibrant library program that promotes a love for reading and expanding knowledge. Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.
- **Curriculum Development Contribution:** These donations are used on the development of our resources in the Curriculum areas of English, Mathematics, Science, ICT, Technology, Physical Education, Humanities, and Performing Arts.
- **Grounds Development Contribution:** These donations assist in the further development of the school grounds. Past projects have been the formation of the Explore garden, vegetable garden and the building of outdoor furniture.



Payment arrangements and methods

Parents will be provided with early notification of annual payment requests (a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the commencement of the school year). Reasonable notice will be given for any other payment requests during the year, such as excursions. Parents will be permitted to make payments in instalments, and be provided with several methods of making payments including BPay, Direct Deposit, cash, cheque or Eftpos. (Parents are able to enter into confidential payment arrangements by contacting the Business Manager on 9707 7799.

Parents who receive Centrelink payments may apply to have their educational expenses deducted from their Centrelink benefit by regular instalments and transferred electronically to Berwick Chase Primary School through Centrepay. For more information please see below link or ask for a form from the school office.
www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/centrepay.

Family support options

There are a number of support options available for parents including but not limited to:

- Second hand uniform, when available, sold from the school office.
- Camps, Sports & Excursion Funding (CSEF) available to eligible families holding a valid means-tested Concession Card. Please ask for a form from the school office.
- State School's Relief support may be available for uniforms/footwear. Please speak to Assistant Principal
- Local Community supports the Assistant Principal can provide further information.

Consideration of hardship *(Refer to Hardship Policy)*

The school understands that families may experience financial difficulties or hardship at times and may be unable to meet full or part payments requested. Families are invited to contact the Principal, Christopher Short, for a confidential discussion and information regarding support options.

Communication with families

The Parent Payment Policy will be published on the school website. It will also be distributed to families each year along with the annual payment request.

General enquiries regarding parent charges may be made to the office on 9707 7799. Concerns should be directed in the first instance to the Business Manager.

Monitoring and review of the implementation of the policy

The School Council, via the Finance Committee, will conduct an annual review of the implementation of the Parent Payment Policy including addressing any concerns raised by the school community. Any changes to the Policy Implementation will be reported back to the community via the school website and report in the school's newsletter.

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

Refer to the attached "Understanding Parent Payment Categories" produced by the DET.

This policy was ratified at School Council on 15th May, 2017

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