



Sebastopol Primary School

P.O. Box 246
Warreen Street
Sebastopol 3356

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.

PARENT PAYMENT CATEGORIES

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/guardians 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. **These items include materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationary.**
 - * **Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, photography, catering).**
 - * **School uniform.**
 - * **Transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.**

Parents are able to provide essential education items at their own cost, provided they meet the specified requirements as set down by the school.

- **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:
 - * Student computer printing for personal use.
 - * Extra-curricular programs or activities (e.g. instrumental music, dance classes).
 - * School-based performances, productions and events.
 - * School magazines, class photographs.



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- **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.

PRINCIPLES

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 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.



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- 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 such as the State Schools Relief Committee and the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. These can be accessed through *Cost support for families*.

CentrePay instalments can be made by families who receive Centrelink benefits to assist with Parent Payments. CentrePay is an easy and affordable way to pay off your school charges throughout the year. Applications forms are available at the school office.

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.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Parents and guardians will be provided with the early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions. Payments can be made to the school via cash, Direct Deposit or payment plans.

Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used. Payment requests to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional extra or voluntary financial contribution. Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment. Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional extras will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.

Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued per year to parents and guardians.

All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

SCHOOL CHARGES

School Council has set the school's student charges as outlined in the appendices that have been distributed to all school families.



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In particular Sebastopol Primary School will:

- Ensure parent payments are set at levels not exceeding the cost of the materials and/or services being provided.
- Parent payments will only be set under the categories of Essential Educational Items, Optional Extras and Voluntary Financial Contributions.
- A range of payment options will be freely available and flexible arrangements may be requested in special circumstances.
- CASES 21 Finance package will be utilised at all times to accurately record all transactions, and provide reports/statements etc.
- Parent/guardian/student details will remain confidential and only used for legitimate purpose within the school.
- Communication with parents will primarily be via the School Newsletters, school mobile phone and Family Statements, which will be provided to all families at least 2 times per year.
- All students will be treated equally and have access to the standard curriculum.

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.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

This document was last ratified by School Council in <MONTH> <YEAR>.

Appendix 1: Understanding Parent Payment Categories

Schools	What does the legislation say?	
	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
	<p>What do schools pay for as part of 'free instruction'?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The standard curriculum for Years F-10 means implementation of the Victorian Curriculum F-10.</p> <p>The standard curriculum for senior secondary schools means a program that enables a student to be awarded a VCE or VCAL qualification.</p>	
<p>What principles govern parent payment practice?</p> <p>Educational Value Access, Equity & Inclusion Affordability Engagement & Support Respect & Confidentiality Transparency & Accountability</p>		
Parents	What may parents be asked to pay for?	
<p>Schools can request payment for Essential Student Learning Items</p>  <p>These are items, activities or services that the school deems essential to student learning of the standard curriculum.</p> <p>Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own.</p> <p>These may also be either:</p>		<p>Schools can request payment for Optional Items</p> <p>These are items, activities or services that are optional and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum.</p> <p>Students may access these on a user-pays basis.</p> <p>These may be either:</p>
<p>Items the student takes temporary or permanent possession of</p> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 		<p>Activities the student purchases</p> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>Items and/or materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum</p> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of silver in metal work instead of copper supplementary exam revision guides
<p>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.</p> <p>For more information on Parent Payments and Personal Devices, visit the DET website at: www.education.vic.gov.au</p>	<p>Schools can invite Voluntary Financial Contributions for</p> 	<p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building or Library fund (Tax deductible) Voluntary contributions for a specific purpose, such as equipment, materials, services. General voluntary contributions