

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Leopold Primary 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.

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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.

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:

### 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.

#### 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
  - camp, 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](http://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

# PARENT PAYMENTS

## Leopold Primary School Policy

### PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

#### **Essential student learning items**

These are items, activities or services that the school deems **essential** to student learning in the standard curriculum. Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own. Examples are:

- items that the student takes temporary or permanent possession of such as text books, student stationery, book bags
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. technology projects, workbooks)
- activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend, such as costs associated with excursions and incursions

Note: If parents choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this must be done in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions for classroom activities) that, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

## Optional items

These are items or services that are **optional** and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students may access these on a user pays basis. These items include:

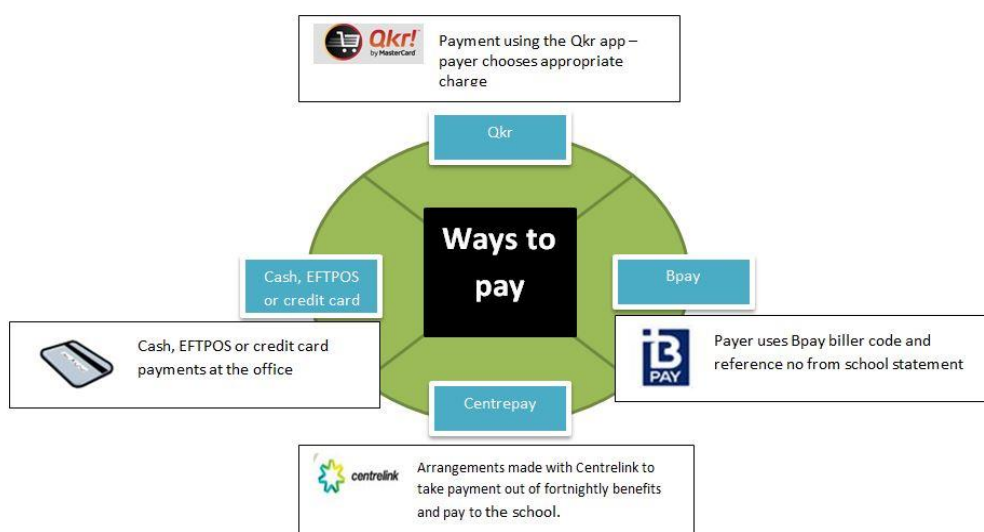
- activities the student purchases (e.g. fees for extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum such as optional camps and excursions; entry fees to school-based performances, productions and sporting events)
- items the student purchases or hires (e.g. netbooks, school magazines; class photos; formals/graduation functions; materials for extracurricular activities; student accident insurance)

## 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 Student Resource Package (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.

## PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS



Instalments arrangements may be made with the Business Manager at any time. The Business Manager will ensure the parent/carer have a plan in place that they are comfortable with.

## FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

### Government Assistance Programs

- The *Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF)* 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 and a special consideration category also exists. Prep students eligible for CSEF may also be eligible for the State Schools' Relief - Prep CSEF uniform package.
- *State Schools Relief* – may cover the cost of new school uniforms, shoes, books and more for disadvantaged students. State Schools Relief only responds to requests from the school principal, assistant principals or welfare coordinators. Parents or Carers who require assistance need to make an appointment with the school to discuss their situation.

### Community Assistance Programs

The school has developed strong links with local services and welfare groups which can provide specialist support and assistance to students and families in financial crisis.

- *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.

### Commonwealth Government Family Assistance

The Commonwealth Government provides a range of payments and services to help families look after their children's health, education and other family issues.

- *The Child Care Benefit* helps eligible families with the cost of outside school hours care, vacation care and registered care. For more information about eligibility and making claims, see Centrelink: [Child Care Benefit](#)
- To be eligible for either of the Family Tax Benefits, A or B, or a Parenting Payment, families must meet an income test. For more information, see: [Centrelink: Families](#)
- [Health Care Card](#) provides help with the cost of prescription medicine under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Commonwealth-funded medical services, and access to state, territory and local government concessions. Families may be eligible for a Health Care Card if they receive specific Commonwealth payments or supplements or the maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit A.
- [Centrepay](#) is a free, voluntary service for Centrelink customers to pay expenses as regular deductions from their Centrelink payments. Centrepay can help families to pay for many types of bills, such as education fees and expenses, child care, rent, electricity, gas and water bills, or medical services.

Families may sometimes experience financial difficulties due to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. Families who find themselves in this category are encouraged to speak with the Business Manager as arrangements can be made to assist the family. Charmaine Granger can be contacted by making an appointment by calling the school on 52501233 or emailing the school on

## CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

[leopold.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:leopold.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au) requesting Charmaine to contact you. Arrangements will remain confidential.

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

- Deferred payments or the extension of payment deadlines
- Flexible payment plans
- Donations
- Support obtaining assistance through agencies

Teachers and the Student Wellbeing team will be proactive in identifying and engaging with parents disconnected from the school who may be experiencing hardship.

## COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- This policy and the school's implementation will be communicated with the school community via the school's website and included in packs for new students.
- Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of requests for payment of essential education items and optional extras (a minimum of six weeks prior to the end of the previous school year).
- Students wishing to participate in optional extra activities such as camps and sporting events must meet the full cost of the activity before attending or have payment agreements made with the Business Manager up to date. Special consideration may be approved by the Business Manager or Principal in hardship circumstances.
- Parents and guardians will receive a family statement each month detailing unpaid Essential Education and Optional Items.
- A list of Voluntary Items will be given to parents who may nominate the amount.
- Enquiries related to charges and payments may be made through contacting the school on 5250 1233 and speaking with the Business Manager.

## MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- School Council will annually review the implementation of this policy to identify any further factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents.

Signed:

School Council President

Signed

School Council Executive Officer (Principal)

This policy was last ratified by School Council in..	20/02/2018
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This Policy was ratified by School Council on...	23/10/2018
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