



Creswick North Primary School **PARENT PAYMENT POLICY 2021**

Purpose

The Victorian community shares a vision to build an education system based on excellence and one that 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.

Aims

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent and transparent.

To ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

General Information

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 under three categories:

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 either provide or pay the school to provide essential items.

These items include:

- materials that the student takes possession of, including work books, text books and stationery;
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. art);
- school uniform;
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

Optional Items are those items, activities or services that are offered in addition to 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.

Principles

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

- **Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount;

- **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 school families;
- **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 Council.

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 may 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 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."](#)

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.

Engaging with Parents

School Council and the Principal will engage in effective communication with the school community and ensure school families are able to share their needs and views regarding parent payments.

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.

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](#)

Implementation at Creswick North Primary School

Parent Payment Charges

- Creswick North Primary School Council will request parent contributions to assist the school in providing an enhanced teaching and learning program for every student, in line with the school's priorities.
- School Council will review parent payments annually to ensure they are in line with Department of Education and Training policy.
- Charges will be clearly categorised as Essential Education Items, Optional Items or Voluntary Contributions.
- School charges will be affordable for most families.
- Parents and guardians also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this will be done in consultation with the school as items are required to meet the specifications provided by the school. There will be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.
- No student will be denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.
- Students are guaranteed access to the standard curriculum program and participation of all students in the full school program will be supported, however parents are expected to make efforts with part payments. The school cannot fully subsidize student participation in extra-curricular activities on a long term basis.

Payment Arrangements and Methods

- Parents will be provided with early notification of annual payment requests **(a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year)**.
- Reasonable notice will be given for any other payment requests during the year (i.e. excursions, camps).
- Parents have options for payment including payment online, by cash or cheque.
- Parents have options in terms of payments. For example:
 - Full amount
 - Payment at the beginning of each Term
 - Half yearly payment (beginning of Terms 1 & 3)
 - Payment of a set amount e.g. \$20 each fortnight
- Parents are able to enter into confidential payment plan arrangements by contacting the school's Business Manager Mrs Zelma Brugger or Principal Mr Matthew Reyntjes on 5345 2012.
- Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.
- Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items 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 to parents and guardians.
- All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians remain confidential.

Family Support Options

- The school understands that families may experience financial difficulties or hardship at times and may be unable to meet full or part payments requested. The Principal will manage individual cases of financial hardship on a case-by-case basis.
- Camps, Sports & Excursion Funding (CSEF) will be available to eligible parents/carers. Some common examples of school-organised programs for which the CSEF payment may be used include:
 - School camps/trips
 - Swimming and other school-organised sporting programs.
 - Outdoor education programs.
 - Excursions/incursions
- The CSEF payment cannot be used towards voluntary school charges, or towards books, stationery, school uniforms, before/after school care, music lessons or other optional items.
- Parents and guardians who hold a valid means-tested concession card or are a temporary foster parents may be eligible for CSEF. This allowance is paid to the school to use towards the cost of the items and experiences listed above. The total CSEF amount per students will be allocated in consultation with parents/carers.
- Additional support options will be investigated by the Principal on a case-by-case basis, for example State Schools Relief, Salvation Army, Ballarat Foundation.

Communication with families

- The Parent Payment Policy will be published on the school's website and will also be distributed to families each year along with the annual outline of school charges.
- General enquiries regarding parent charges may be made to the School Office on 5334 6354. Concerns should be directed to the Principal.
- The Principal will engage in effective communication with the school community through the school newsletter, additional notes home as required, school website and Family Information Booklet regarding school payments. Parents will be encouraged to discuss their needs and views with the Principal.
- Any remaining portion of the CSEF not expended by the end of the school year may be carried forward by the school towards the following year's camps, sports and excursions expenses for the eligible child.

Monitoring and review of the implementation of the policy

- 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 school community.

2021 Parent Charges

Essential Items: \$60, This payment is for Classroom Computer Apps, Japanese, Art, Athletics and Reading Eggs Annual subscriptions.

Optional Charges: \$110 swimming, including bus – this cost is to be confirmed

Other Optional Charges Incursion and excursions \$5-\$20 as organised throughout the year.
School Camps anticipated to be \$260, however cost will be finalised in 2021

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last approved by school council on 1st December 2020 and is scheduled for review in November 2021.

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**



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