

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## 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
  - 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](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 Payment Policy

## PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Grovedale College School Council has set the 2017 charges in a clear and transparent form in order to better assist with planning. Parents have a clear picture of the majority, if not all charges, associated with their child's learning program for the full year.

### Essential Education Charges

Essential Education Charges are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents or carers are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. We ensure that costs are kept to a minimum and that payment requests always support and enrich the school's teaching and learning program.

Detail	Year Level	Semester/Yearly Charge	Cost
<b>Education Material &amp; Service Charge</b>	7 - 12	Yearly	\$195
This charge covers the following range of education materials and services provided in support of the core curriculum. These include: Student Organiser, Locker Hire, Learning Technology Access & Support, College Sports/Beach Carnivals, Technology Materials, Leadership Programs			
<b>EBook Jacaranda</b>	7 - 9	Yearly	\$100
eBook Jacaranda (This package includes Electronic Text Books for English, Maths, Science, History, Geography, Economics & Citizenship, Health & PE and Art. Students have access to Online Digital Resources in these areas. This means a considerable saving for families as there is no need to purchase hard copies of texts in these areas except the English Novel and LOTE text.			
<b>Art Program Kit</b>	7 - 9	One off	\$66
The Art Kit is kept at the College for each individual student and represents substantial cost savings to parents. This kit includes Pouch, Sketch Pad, Sharpener, Eraser, Fine liner, Paint Palette, Glue, Grey leads, Pencil Set, Paint Brushes and Gouche Paint Set.			
Combination Lock	7 - 12	One off	\$15
Challenge Camp	7	One off	\$75
Yr 7 Multicultural Day	7	One off	\$30
Yr 8 Medieval Day	8	One off	\$35
Yr 9 Camp	9	One off	\$325
Yr 9 River To Coast Program	9	Yearly	\$100

### Optional Items

Optional extras are those that are provided in addition to the 'standard curriculum program', and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if you choose to access them for your child you will be required to pay for them.

Detail	Year Level	Semester/Yearly Charge	Cost
Sharp Scientific Calculator	7 - 12	One off	\$20
College Magazine	7 - 12	Annually	\$15
Instrumental Music	7 - 12		From \$20
Instrument Hire	7 - 12		\$80
Sports Academy – includes Polo top	7	Yearly	\$105
Sports Academy	8	Yearly	\$60
Sports Academy	9	Yearly	\$200
Sports Academy	10	Yearly	\$300
Sports Academy	11	Yearly	\$300
Yr 9 Out There	9	Semester	\$100
Performing Arts – Take Over Theatre	9	Semester	\$90
Design/Creativity/Tech Wood & Metal	10	Semester	\$25
Performing Arts - Drama	10	Semester	\$20
Food Technology	10	Semester	\$95
Recreation	10	Semester	\$130

Systems Technology	10	Semester	\$30
Visual Arts	10	Semester	\$30
Visual Communication	10	Semester	\$10
GITTC	10	Per Term	\$50
Art	11 / 12	Yearly	\$60 / \$60
Biology	11 / 12	Yearly	\$75 / \$45
Chemistry	11 / 12	Yearly	\$20 / \$20
Design & Technology - Wood	11 / 12	Yearly	\$50 / \$50
Food Technology	11 / 12	Yearly	\$190 / \$135
Outdoor Education	11 / 12	Yearly	\$320 / \$220
Systems & Technology	11 / 12	Yearly	\$60 / \$60
Sports Academy	11	Yearly	\$300
Visual Communication & Design	11 / 12	Yearly	\$40 / \$40
Drama	12	Yearly	\$30
Yr 12 Camp	12	One off	\$240
Various curriculum related excursions			

### **Voluntary Financial Contributions**

Parents are welcome to make a contribution to the valuable College resources such as the Chaplaincy Program and the Building Program. These programs are currently set at \$15 and \$10.

### **PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS**

Payments and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions via the school charges sheets and course confirmation in the previous year.

To further assist parents with payments, these payment options have been developed:

- Full Payment to the Administration Office by cash, credit card or eftpos.
- BPay – information is provided on the family statement.
- Instalments of two equal parts at the beginning of each semester.  
(*Semester 1 – 3 February 2017 and Semester 2 – 21 July 2017*).
- A payment plan is available for parents in order to spread payments across the school year. Please contact College Business Manager.
- Qkr – Smart phone app that is available to parents.
- Compass – is available to parents to make payments for excursions, incursions, camps and sporting activities.

Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment. All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payment by parents and guardians are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS**

The College appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist parents, and parents can also organize a payment plan with the Business Manager.

### **Support Agencies and Funds**

Grovedale College has established partnerships with some welfare and support agencies that can provide assistance to students and their families with the costs of text books, uniforms and school shoes. Access to these supports is available through referral from the Student Welfare Coordinator. Families generally require a current relevant Centrelink benefit card to access

these supports. Please contact the Student Welfare Coordinator. The College is also registered with Centrelink to receive payments via their Centrepay system which is only available to holders of relevant current Centrelink benefit cards.

### **Secondhand Books and Uniforms**

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education secondhand uniform is available from the College Uniform Shop. Secondhand books are available from the Sustainable School Shop.

### **Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund (CSEF)**

The CSEF will run from 2015 – 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 Uniform Package**

State Schools Relief offers a Year 7 uniform package for parents that are eligible for the CSEF funding. Contact the Administration Office to organize this package.

## **CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP**

Grovedale College School Council makes every effort to keep the cost and number of items that need to be purchased to a minimum. We ensure that the costs are affordable for all parents. If you anticipate having difficulty making payments please make an appointment to speak with Leanne McKenzie (Business Manager) to discuss possible support options and flexible payment arrangements. Any information about your financial circumstances, payment arrangements or status will be kept strictly confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel.

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

## **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

The Parent Payment Policy and its implementation will be available on the College Website [www.grovedale.vic.edu.au](http://www.grovedale.vic.edu.au) or by request from the Administration Office 52454545. Parents will be continually informed of College related charges during course selection process, confirmation day and via accounts sent home each term. At all times we invite parents to contact the College if they have any queries in regard to their family account. Complaints can be directed to the College Business Manager or Principal.

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

School Council is responsible for continuous monitoring of the principles and processes used by the school to ensure that parent payment practices are adhered to. School Council will review the Parent Payment Policy annually.

**Date of approval by School Council**

**26 October 2016**