

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Templestowe Heights 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 parents¹ 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. Parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the school where practical and appropriate. At Templestowe Heights Primary School they include:

- Textbooks (i.e. take home reader books) and subscriptions (i.e. Mathletics, Reading Eggs)
- Stationery items, such as glue sticks, pencils, pens, exercise books, photocopy paper and facial tissues.
- Materials and resources that support our curriculum programs (i.e. iPads, laptops, robotics, science equipment, art supplies, musical instruments, PE equipment, Italian resources, dictionaries, maths measuring equipment)

¹ 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.

- Resources that support other whole-school programs including our School Ball, School Production, Art Show
- Excursions, whole-school sporting days (such as athletics day)
- Incursions (such as our annual artist in residence, visiting authors and Life Education)

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 these items, they are required to pay for them. At Templestowe Heights Primary School they include:

- Swimming program
- Camps
- Class photos
- Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) for grade 5/6 students
- Private music lessons
- Interschool sports
- Year 6 graduation
- Tickets for School Production and School Ball

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. At Templestowe Heights Primary School they include:

- A tax deductible donation to our Buildings and Grounds fund to help us create and maintain a stimulating environment for our students. The donations go a long way to keeping our oval and playgrounds beautiful, topping up playground soft fall, constructing garden beds, installing outdoor seating, purchasing shade sails and caring for our community garden and chicken coop.
- A tax deductible donation to our Library fund to help purchase current and popular library books for our students to read and borrow during their weekly library sessions, before school, at playtime or lunchtime.

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.

Options for family and guardian support include:

- Second hand uniform
- Camps, Sports, Excursions Funding (CSEF)
- State Schools Relief fund
- Local community support organisations

All parents are provided with the name and contact details of a nominated parent payment contact person at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

At Templestowe Heights Primary School, families can contact the Principal or Assistant Principal by phone (9850 1796), email templestowe.heights.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au or speak in person about their financial situation. All communications are kept strictly confidential.

Understanding Parent Payment Categories

Templestowe Heights Primary School Parent Payment Policy

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

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

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

- Payment methods include **One off payment** and **Pay-by-the-month**
- Payments can be made by **cheque, cash, credit card** (Master Card or Visa), by using **BPay**, or by **EFTPOS**.
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to talk with the school's Business Manager or Principal if they would like to discuss other payment options or methods. The front office telephone number is 9850 1796.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

School Council 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.

Each year a letter to the community will be distributed with key information relating to the parent payment policy. This letter includes a FAQ section with reasoning behind the fee costings and is developed in consultation with School Council. This information is also referenced in the school's weekly newsletter and displayed on the school's website. This information is also part of the welcome pack for new families and discussed at the new prep family information night.

The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department's [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#).

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

It is the responsibility of School Council to annually monitor and review the implementation of the policy, to ensure transparency. Feedback will be sought at the end of each year to ensure there is openness and engagement across the school community.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's policy review cycle.

Date of approval by School Council: 19th June 2019

FAQs

Why is the policy changing?

The Department of Education and Training has introduced a new policy that is required to be implemented by all Victorian state schools.

Am I paying more?

No, the total amount of the essential fees remain exactly the same as the past four years (since 2013).

Have some fees now become essential when they were previously optional?

Yes, under the new policy, many items that were considered optional fees have now become essential because they are considered to be items, activities or services that are essential to student learning of the standard curriculum.

How do I pay?

You will receive your school fee invoice on 1 December. This invoice will show the school fees for the following year.

1. Upfront payment option
 - You can pay your yearly school fees in one payment. Payment is due by 28 February in any given year. Payment can be made via BPAY, EFTPOS, cash or cheque.
2. Pay-by-the-month option
 - You can pay your yearly school fee by setting-up a pay-by-the-month option via BPAY, EFTPOS, cash or cheque.
 - Just divide your yearly payment by 8 to calculate the amount of each instalment.
 - Payments must be made by the 15th of each February, March, April, May, June, July, August and September.
3. Other payment option
 - Please talk with our Business Manager, Margaret de Haas to discuss other payment options. Margaret's telephone number is 9850 1796.

Do I pay the optional fees (such as for swimming and camps) with the other fees?

No, any optional fee, such as for swimming or a camp, will be communicated to families when the event is planned. Families will then receive an invoice for these optional events.

What if I can't pay the school fees?

We understand that families can sometimes experience financial difficulty or a crisis which makes payment difficult.

Please feel free to talk with Rhys Coulson (Principal) or Margaret de Haas (Business Manager) regarding payment options. You can phone us on 9850 1796.

Information on Financial Assistance for Families is available on the Department of Education and Training website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/families.aspx#link31>

Is there a discount for families with more than one child?

No, the amount for the essential items contribution has considered this and has been calculated to ensure that any family, whether they have one or more child at the school, will not be paying more than previously.

Does this change my payment for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF)?

No.

More information on the CSEF is available here on the Department of Education and Training website: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/csef.aspx?Redirect=1>

I need help!

Please feel free to talk with our Business Manager Margaret de Haas with any queries. Margaret's telephone number is 9850 1796.

The school office is open 8:00am – 5:00pm, to assist with any school fee payment queries.

For further information and the Department of Education's answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents, see:

[Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents](#)