

Parent Payment Policy

Pascoe Vale Primary School

VISION/PURPOSE

To ensure school-level parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the Department of Education and Training (DET) policy requirements.

To ensure that students at Pascoe Vale Primary School receive the best resources possible for the education of all students.

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.

At Pascoe Vale Primary School we have high expectations for all our students. We value academic excellence across all areas of the curriculum. We aim to provide exemplary stimulating programs so that all students can reach their full potential in a safe, supportive environment.

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 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.

GUIDELINES

- All students have access to the standard curriculum program. This policy covers the three parent payment categories (essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions).
- The school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.
- Items that students consume or take possession of are to be accurately costed.
- Cost is kept low relative to the cost of the items to be purchased.
- Payment requests must be clearly itemised within each category.
- Parents/guardians are given the option of purchasing equivalent essential education items themselves, in consultation with the school.
- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions. For example if parents/guardians choose for their children not to attend a school excursion/camp, an alternative option will be provided.
- The status and details of any payments or non-payments are confidential.
- Parents are provided with early notice of payment requests with a minimum of two weeks' notice before due date of payment.
- Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Principals, as executive officers of the School Council, must ensure that the school-level policy complies with the DET's policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.

Important:

- It is not acceptable to coerce or harass parents/guardians to obtain payment.
- The Principal must ensure any payment records are kept confidential.
- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by the school to obtain any funds from parents/guardians.

Parent Payment Categories:

The following information describes the three parent payment categories that School Council may request payments from parents.

Essential Student Learning Items.

These are items which parents/guardians pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program and include:

- Materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and student stationary.
- Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. visual arts, science, catering).
- Activities associated with, but not part of instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps, incursions and excursions which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport and entrance costs).

Note: If parents/guardians choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this should 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 home economics) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

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 judgment 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

Pascoe Vale Primary School Council consider the proposed requests for parent payments. The cost of the Parent Payment is kept to a minimum and aims to be 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

Optional Items

These are items provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students.

They are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents/guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items include:

- Extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music).
- BYOD Program.
- School-based performances, productions and events.
- Year 6 Graduation and end-of-year activities.
- Interschool sport.

Voluntary Financial Contributions

Parents/guardians, or anyone else, can be invited to make a donation to the school for the following purposes:

- Contributions to the Voluntary Financial Contribution (the building fund or the library fund) These funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible.
- Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers or student-related services.
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

SCHOOL-LEVEL PROCESSES

Communication with Families

All communication with parents/guardians, including payment requests, are to be fair and reasonable. Payment requests, letters or CASES21 or COMPASS invoices for student materials and services charges must be accompanied by the following information:

- A description of each of the three parent payment categories.
- That parents are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier, where appropriate.
- The availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the Principal if the parent wishes to discuss these.
- A copy of the school Parent Payment policy.

Administrative and Payment Processes

The school-level policy should ensure that:

- Administrative and financial processes are to be compliant with DET requirements such as CASES 21 or COMPASS financial reporting.
- Invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice per year is sent to all parents/guardians.
- Receipts are issued to parents upon payment and receipted on CASES 21 or COMPASS.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP - SUPPORT OPTIONS

A range of support options are available for parents experiencing hardship in paying for essential items including:

- The Camps, Sports Excursion Fund (CSEF) which, as of mid-2015, is provided by the government to help with camps, sports and excursion costs and is paid yearly to eligible families and students. The amount is sent to the school and is held as a credit for camps, sports and excursions. Currently the amount is \$125 per year per student for primary students.
- Access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the Principal or Welfare Officer to assist with clothing/uniforms.

- Welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with the school to provide further assistance to students and their families.
- There is a limited low cost clothing pool. Please see the school office for details.
- Option to pay in instalments.

The Principal must exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The Principal is to make decisions about how to manage non-payment of essential education items or optional extras on a case-by-case basis. Where families have difficulty making payments, the Principal is expected to discuss with them the range of support options available and to negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by instalments. Parents/guardians who experience difficulties providing or paying the school to provide essential education items are encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal or nominated parent payment nominee – Mandy Sicura (Business Manager) to discuss alternative payment methods.

REVIEW OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Pascoe Vale Primary School 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.

RELATED LEGISLATION

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Sections 2.2.4. (1), 2.3.6 (1) (c), 2.2).

OTHER RESOURCES

- The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the DET's [School Policy and Advisory Guide - \(Parent Payment\)](#).
- Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see: [Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents](#)
- Parent Payment Letter (PVPS Office)
- Parent Remittance Advice (PVPS Office)

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle in 2019.

This policy was ratified by School Council on the 17/10/2016.