

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Black Rock 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 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.

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.

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

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 2019

Black Rock Primary School

Black Rock Primary School Policy Guide

PURPOSE

This policy provides information for the school community regarding parent payments at Black Rock Primary school. This policy covers payments for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions that our school requests and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests will be made. This policy complies with the requirements of the Department of Education and Training (DET) Parent Payments Policy.

GUIDELINES

For the purpose of this policy the term *parents* is also inclusive of guardians, carers or family members who are making payments for a student.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Black Rock Primary School Parent Payment Policy developed and approved by School Council.

The policy ensures that:

- The Parent Payment Policy complies with the requirements of DET.
- The School Council will ensure that the school's parent payment policy continues to comply with the Departmental requirements as well as meeting school community expectations.
- Parents/guardians receive early notice of payment requests i.e. a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year.
- Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Costs are kept to a minimum.
- Parents/guardians are informed of alternative payment options and are invited to contact the Principal if they wish to discuss these options.
- All requests for payment are fair and reasonable.
- Access to the standard curriculum program is not withheld and enrolment or advancement to the next year level is never held as a condition of payment.
- Details of how payments will be spent by the school are provided in writing to the school community.
- Parents/guardians are not harassed or coerced to obtain payment.
- Invoices for unpaid essential educational items or optional items accepted by parents/guardians will not be sent more than once a month.
- Collectors of any type, including debt collectors, to obtain any funds from parents/guardians will not be used under any circumstances.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice is sent to all parents/guardians.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child/ren are provided with essential education items. Parents/guardians also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents/guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications provided by the school.

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

School Council requests payments from parents for student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories (summarised in “Understanding Parent Payment Categories” graphic p4):

Essential Education Items

Essential Education Items are those compulsory items, activities or services that are essential to support student learning of the standard curriculum. These are items the school considers essential for all students and which students take possession of including text books, student stationery items, art supplies etc.

Parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the school where practical and appropriate.

Optional Items

Optional items (or non-essential materials and services) are those provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items can include:

- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. excursions/incursions, instrumental music tuition)
- sports events and competitions outside in addition to the Physical Education program e.g. House Sports, Interschool Sporting Competition
- school-based performances, productions and events
- materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school photographs or magazines)

Voluntary financial contributions

School councils may invite parents and guardians of a student enrolled at the school, or anyone else, to make a donation in the form of a voluntary financial contribution to the school. Schools may invite voluntary financial contributions for the following purposes:

- Contributions to a Building Fund or contributions to a Library Fund (these funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)
- Contributions for a specific project identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the Student Resource Package.
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS & METHODS

Black Rock Primary School offers flexible payment plans which provide parents with a number of instalment options and various ways to pay e.g. COMPASS, Credit Card/EFTPOS or cash. All payments are receipted in CASES21. Records of payments, contributions and any outstanding payments will remain confidential. Invoices for unpaid Essential Education Items are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once per month.

Current and detailed information is provided to parents through the annual Parent Contribution letter, which every family in the school receives for each child enrolled.

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

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|----------|---|
| Option A | Full Payment through Compass from November 30 th , 2018. |
| Option B | Three pre-set instalments through Compass due January 1 st , March 12 th and May 21 st , 2019. |
| Option C | Cash payments can be made at the school office from Monday February 4 th , 2019. |

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The school 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, including:

- The **Camps, Sports and Excursion fund (CSEF)** supports families who met eligibility criteria set by the Victorian Government to ensure the student has the opportunity to participate in important, educational and fun activities.
- The **State Schools Relief Committee** support, applications can be made via the Principal to assist with clothing/uniforms
- **Community Information and Assistance** – there are a number of local services and welfare groups which can provide specialist support and assistance to students and families in financial crisis. A reference list of these organisations can be found at the end of this policy document.
- **The Commonwealth Government** provides a range of payments and services to help families look after their children's health, education and other family issues. Parents and guardians should contact their local Centrelink office for more information.

No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Parent Payment Contact Person

The school Principal is the school's nominated parent payment contact person who parents can communicate confidentially with by phone, email or in person about their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments.

REFUNDS

Our school will consider requests for partial or full refunds of parent payments on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally we will not be able to refund parent payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- This policy will be located on the school's website and Compass Portal.
- Parents are able to raise any issues or make general inquiries about charges to the school's Principal.

RESOURCES:

References

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Sections 2.2.4.(1), 2.3.6 (1)(c), 2.2.
- Department of Education & Training School Policy Advisory Guide:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/parentpayments.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpayments.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/families.aspx>

Community Assistance Links

- <http://cris.crisisservices.org.au/>
- <http://www.cisvic.org.au/>
- <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/communities-and-vulnerablepeople/programs-services/emergency-relief>
- <http://financial-counselling.org.au/>

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Black Rock Primary 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 community via notice on the school website and report in the school Newsletter.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...

November 2018