



## PARENT PAYMENTS

### Rationale

- The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program (i.e. the eight key learning areas). It empowers School Councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to generate funds.
- DET provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) and various programs. This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs.
- Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and senior secondary certificates (VCE, VCAL and VET programs).
- The School Council is responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payment policy.
- There are three categories of payment – essential education items, optional extras and voluntary contributions.

### Purpose

- To ensure school-level parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the DET's policy requirements.
- To ensure Seaholme Primary School complies with the legislative requirements of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

### Definitions

#### Essential 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 stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, photography, catering)
- school uniform (where applicable)
- activities associated with, but not part of instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps 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.

#### Optional Extras

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:

- instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. student computer printing for personal use)

- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music)
- school-based performances, productions and events
- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (e.g. the use of more expensive materials)
- materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school magazines)
- school facilities and equipment not associated with providing the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).

### Voluntary Financial Contributions

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

- contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund (these trust 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.

### Implementation

- The School Council is responsible for developing and implementing a school-level parent payment system that ensures
  - all students have access to the standard curriculum program
  - it covers the three parent payment categories i.e. essential education items, optional extras or 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 accurately costed
  - cost is kept to a minimum
  - payment requests are 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 compulsory 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 (i.e. a minimum of six week's notice prior to the end of the previous school year)
  - payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
  - school-level payments meet the community's expectations
- The school will ensure that all communication with parents/guardians, including payment requests, is fair and reasonable. Payment requests, letters or CASES21 invoices for student materials and services charges will be accompanied by the following information –
  - a description of each of the three parent payment categories
  - details of what parents are being asked to pay for
  - 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.
- At all times, the Principal will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual families and will make decisions on a case-by-case basis.
- Where families have difficulty making payments, the Principal will encourage parents/guardians to make an appointment to discuss with them the range of support options available, and to negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by installments, directing the parent to Centrelink for the Schoolkids Bonus, obtaining support from State Schools Relief, accessing the Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund, welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools.
- The Principal will also explore ways in which quality second-hand uniforms could be made available to families.
- A copy of the school-level policy will be provided.
- School Council will endorse all parent payment requests.
- It is not acceptable to use coercion or harass parents/guardians to obtain payment.
- Under no circumstances will collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by the school to obtain any funds from parents/guardians.
- The Principal, as Executive Officer of School Council, will ensure that the school-level policy complies with the DET's policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.
- The school-level policy will ensure that:
  - administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 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 immediately upon payment and receipted on CASES 21.
- All documentation will be kept confidential.
- If in doubt, for the most frequently asked questions, the Principal will refer to DET's website [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and other resources such as [Costs and Financial Assistance, Finance](#).
- In the event of a parent complaint, the school will refer to the *Complaints & Concerns, Parents Policy*.

### Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update early January 2016).

This update February 2016 was ratified by School Council on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2016