



ASPENDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

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.

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

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.

- **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

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](#)

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Aspendale Primary School provide a comprehensive, creative and challenging educational program for all our students in a supportive and caring environment.

Aspendale Primary School Council can request payments from parents for student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories as stated under 'What can schools charge for?' with the understanding that Optional Items that require a payment for a non-standard curriculum program are not received, students will not participate in activities (eg. interschool sport, excursions, incursions, swimming, camp) and an alternative program will be provided.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Parents will be provided with notification of annual payment requests, but not required to pay these prior to commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used. Reasonable notice will be given along with payment instalments for some payment requests during the year ie:camps, sports; fees for extra curricula activities.

Aspendale Primary Schools preferred method of payment is via QKR however payments are also accepted by EFTPOS, Credit Card, Cash, Cheque and BPAY.

Confidential payment plan arrangements or self-managed payment plan arrangements can be implemented by contacting the Business Manager Mrs Dee Smith on 9580 3255.

Ensure payment arrangements coincide with the timing of the availability of Camps, Sports, Excursion Fund (CSEF) support for eligible parents/guardians and that the school allocate the funds accordingly in line with DET requirements.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

We have various options to assist families who are suffering financial hardship, some of these are listed below for your information:

- CSEF is available to families who hold a health care card or are on a Centrelink pension.
Ask at the office for more information.
- For new Foundation Families State School Relief is an organisation associated with Schools, who can supply school uniform, books and shoes to eligible students.
- 2nd hand Uniform shop is available through Reliable Uniforms Now (RUN) please see the office for contact details.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Parents/Guardian experiencing financial hardship should make contact with Ms Larrieu or Mrs Smith, who are our parent payment contacts. Parents/Guardians can communicate with them by phone (9580 3255), email (aspendale.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au) or in person, about their financial situation and related difficulties to discuss their options and arrangements available to them.

- The school will not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment of essential education items, optional extras or voluntary financial contributions.
- The school ensure that the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents and guardians are confidential.
- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
- All students have access to the standard curriculum program.
- Parents and guardians are provided with an alternative option for their children if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp.
- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by schools to obtain any funds from parents and guardians.
- We know it can be difficult to discuss this hardship, and ensure you that we will always treat your situation with the utmost of confidence. We may also discretely approach families who we think may need support and special payment arrangements to be made.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

This Parent Payment Policy will be published on our school website: www.aspendale.vic.edu.au

Aspendale Primary School will provide parents and guardians with early notice of requests for payment of essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions. A minimum of six week's notice should be given to allow parents and guardians sufficient planning time. Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

Parents/guardians are able to raise any issues or make general inquiries about charges by contacting either the Principal Ms Coby Larrieu or Business Manager, Mrs Dee Smith, by phone, email or in person.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Aspendale School Council will continue to monitor the implementation of this policy, identify the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents, how/when it will be reported back to the school community, and timing and processes of review.

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

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