

# Parent Payment Policy

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School Councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories – essential education items, optional education items and voluntary financial contributions. (refer Appendix A – Understanding Parent Payment Categories)

This Policy ensures that:

- Costs are kept to a minimum
- Payment requests are clearly itemised under the three parent payment categories
- Items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment of voluntary contribution
- Access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level will not be withheld as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.

Swan Hill College spends considerable time selecting the most appropriate items and services to meet the needs of our students.

Parents and guardians also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardian choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications provided by the school. There may also be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.

**Essential Education Items** are those items, activities or services that the school deems essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents or guardians are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate.

These items include

- materials that the student takes possession of, including text books, student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, technology projects, photography)
- school uniform
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

**Optional education items** (or non-essential materials and services) are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which 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 include:

- student computer printing for personal use
- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes
- school-based performances, productions and events
- school magazines, class photographs
- Camps, Excursions, Incursions, Sports

**Voluntary Financial Contribution** are for those items and services that parents or guardian are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, a library or building trust.

### **Other Support Options**

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. Various support options are available to assist eligible parents, including State Schools Relief or the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. Where the Camp, Sports and Excursion funding is insufficient to cover the total cost of the camp or excursion, the funds will be applied either upon receipt of the shortfall, or first installment, then the funding will be applied either as the balance of the excursion or as a second or subsequent installment.

Parents can discuss payment arrangements with the Business Manager. Consideration will be given on a case by case basis and will be dealt with in a confidential manner.

### **Payment Arrangements**

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions.

Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment requests provided in a fair and reasonable time frame. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options are provided:

- Option A        In Full at the beginning of Term 1
- Option B        Payments at the beginning of each Term
- Option C        Half yearly payments (beginning of Terms 1 & 3)
- Option D        Other payment arrangements as agreed with the Business Manager

Alternative payment options are available and parents wishing to explore this option are encouraged to make an appointment with the school's Business Manager, by phone on 5036 4900 or email [swan.hill.c@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:swan.hill.c@edumail.vic.gov.au) for a confidential discussion about alternate arrangements.

Payments may be requested, but not required, prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

Payment requests to parents will be itemised and the category in which each item falls will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional item or voluntary financial contribution.

Receipts will be issued for all payments received.

Reminders to parents for unpaid essential education items or optional items will be generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month.

Voluntary financial contributions will be invited once and one reminder issued per year to parents and guardians. All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

## **Refunds**

Occasions may arise where a family requests a refund for fees that have been paid to the college. i.e. subject student is enrolled in alters, student may exit the college part way through the year.

Refund requests are referred to the Business Manager who will make a recommendation to the Principal for their approval/denial of the refund request.

Camps and Excursions refunds will be assessed on a case by case basis and only in exceptional circumstances will a refund be provided to the student. Due consideration for any refund will include an assessment of the costs incurred by the school at the time the student withdraws from the camp or excursion, is there any amount recoverable by the school from the external provider, and the circumstances for which the student has withdrawn from the activity.

## **Reports**

Business Manager will circulate to Learning Leaders, in conjunction with their program budgets, on a regular basis the Essential Education Item and Camp and Excursion fee reports.

**References:** DET guidelines [Parent Payments](#)

[Understanding Parent Payment Categories](#)

Surry Hills Primary School 2017 Parent Payment policy


## 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



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

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.

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](http://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