

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Essendon North 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

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.

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
- **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

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



POLICY TITLE: Parent Payment Policy

DATE RATIFIED: 2019

REVIEW DATE: 2020

ENPS MISSION: We maximise the potential of all; empowering independence, excellence, innovation and engagement with the world.

Critical Engagement with
the World

Academic Excellence

Inclusive Learning
Environment

Personal and Social
Wellbeing

RATIONALE

ENPS expectations align directly with DET requirements. Parent Payments are financial payments requested of families in order to enable Essendon North Primary School to maximise student learning outcomes. It is imperative that ENPS provides advance guidance of Parent Payments so that sufficient financial planning can be made by families. ENPS is committed to creating a positive, connected school community, implementing best practices in our endeavour to continually support student learning outcomes, engagement and wellbeing.

This policy is governed by the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act) which provides for free instruction in the standard curriculum program to all students in government schools. 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 program refers to the eight key learning areas – English, Mathematics, Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Arts, Languages, Health and Physical Education, and Technologies, and four capability areas – Critical and Creative thinking, Intercultural, Ethical and Personal and Social.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and explicit guidelines for parent payments, inclusive of:

- defining parent/carer payments, both mandatory and discretionary.
- increasing transparency to all families in the community
- outlining pathways available to families experiencing financial hardship.

IMPLEMENTATION

Parent Payment Charges

The Book Pack consists of the following *Essential*, *Optional* and *Voluntary* components.

The **Essential** student learning items which families and carers pay for consist of the book pack, which is delivered to students in classrooms ready for the first day of school; and bulk purchases of further individual and classroom supplies during the year, for curriculum areas including:

- information and communication technology (ICT) supplies
- online ICT subscriptions such as Reading Eggs and Mathletics
- purchase of apps, for school owned iPads
- library resources
- Physical Education equipment
- Visual and Performing Arts materials
- Language Other Than English (LOTE) materials
- STEAM

These resources are used in classrooms for student use. They align with our teaching of the curriculum and delivery of educational outcomes for all students in every year level. This amount is non-refundable as materials and services are paid for by the school at the commencement of the school year.

As per the Department of Education and Training's guidelines, parents are advised that they have the option of purchasing equivalent essential student learning items themselves, in consultation with the School. If parents wish to make purchases separately, then please consult the Principal so that items can be as similar as possible.

ENPS will make every effort to keep the cost of items at a minimum by gaining considerable savings using bulk purchasing.

Optional Extras are non-essential materials and services that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program and offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis, therefore if parents and carers choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items may include:

- Science Talent Competition
- ICAS Competition - Math's, English, Science
- Instrumental Music Program lessons
- School Excursions/Incursions
- School Camps
- Extra-curricula activities (for example, State School Spectacular and Wakakkiri)

Voluntary Financial Contributions: Community Engagement and Maintenance Levy

In addition to specific school fundraising activities, the school is grateful to receive voluntary contributions to assist in meeting the key improvement strategies of the educational needs outlined in the Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan. These funds enable the school to maximize the potential of all learning and teaching opportunities. We are continuously working alongside all of our stakeholders to maximise understanding and appreciation of the material impact these voluntary contributions make. In the past voluntary contributions have supported

school initiatives including development of a learning environments master plan, provision of experts for community learning and parent education, and general school up keep.

Payment arrangements and methods

There is a payment plan for Parents/Carers who are experiencing financial hardship. The payment plan can be filled in at the office and is kept private and confidential. The payment plan consists of either weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments - with a requirement that the payments will need to be completed by March the following year. The Parent/Carers and Principal will sign the payment plan agreement.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The school appreciates that at times it can be difficult for families to meet their financial obligations. Please ask to speak to the Business Manager if you require support and assistance. State Schools Relief and financial assistance for Camps, Sports and Excursions (CSEF) are available to families experiencing hardship. Enquiries should be made at the office for more information.

Applications for the CSEF

Please note that the Victorian State Government introduced the CSEF in May 2015. Applications for the CSEF can be made at the school's office. You are required to present your current Health Care Card or Pension Card. Please note that the CSEF is not able to be used for the ENPS Essential Book Pack, uniforms or Year Six Graduation. Applications for each year will commence in February of that year.

For further information on the CSEF please refer to the website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/ema.aspx>.

Second Hand Uniforms

In addition, second hand uniforms are available to families in the event there are donations received from our community.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The School provides clear communication, via newsletters, electronic communication, teachers and the executive team, to ensure that families are aware that support and assistance is available to those experiencing financial hardship. ENPS staff will also sensitively monitor family situations where financial hardship may be experienced and take proactive and confidential steps to reach out to those families. For families seeking assistance, the initial contact point to discuss options is the school's Business Manager, however it is common for the Assistant Principals and/or the Principal to also become involved, depending on the individual circumstances. As resolution of financial hardship matters are progressed, all discussions will be documented and all communications such

as meetings, phone calls, emails and letters, will be recorded but will remain private and confidential at all times. For further information, refer to the ENPS Hardship Policy

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Families will be notified about the Parent Payment Policy via the newsletter and the website. Should there be any concerns or grievances in relation to this policy or implementation, the ENPS Queries, Concerns and Complaints Policy is to be followed.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Essential Book Packs for the following school year will be sent home to families in the last week of October of the current year, to allow time for parents to ask any questions or to discuss and if necessary, request a payment plan.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed during 2018 or earlier if required, in conjunction with the Victorian DET's policies.

Related Policies

Hardship Policy
Incursion and Excursion Policy
Camping Policy
Uniform Policy

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Effective Date	Owner	Description of change
4	21 ST October 2019	Finance Committee	Inline with DET requirements
3	22 nd October 2018	Finance Committee	inline with DET requirements
2	13 th October 2017	Finance Committee	inline with DET requirements
1	24 th October 2016	Finance Committee	New policy inline with DET requirements

* Information on revisions and new versions to be added to the top of the table, therefore the most recent is always on top.

APPENDIX 1: Payment Plan Agreement for Parent/Carers

PAYMENT PLAN AGREEMENT FOR PARENTS/CARERS

I /We

(Name of adult)

(Name of second adult, if applicable)

Request a payment plan to cover the cost of the ENPS Essential Book Pack, Compulsory Levies and **Voluntary Contributions**

(a total INSERT COST: 2020 \$340.00 and \$60.00 **Voluntary Contributions**)

I /We agree to make the following repayments to Essendon North Primary School (please tick your preferred option):

Weekly

Monthly

Fortnightly

Payment in full

For the amount of \$ _____ *per payment*, commencing on: _____

(date)

I/We understand that payment must be received in full no later than **INSERT DATE**.

Signature of Parent/Carer: _____ Date: _____

Principal _____



Essendon North Primary School **Hardship Policy**

POLICY TITLE: Hardship Policy

DATE RATIFIED: 2019

REVIEW DATE: 2020

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Critical Engagement with
the World

Academic Excellence

Inclusive Learning
Environment

Personal and Social
Wellbeing

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. Hardship refers to the inability to pay due to financial difficulties or circumstances. This can be temporary financial difficulty due to a sudden unexpected change of circumstances; as a result of low and/or fixed income which leads to ongoing financial difficulty or a combination of low income and unexpected change in circumstances. The ENPS Hardship Policy reflects a proactive strategy to discreetly support families experiencing unexpected loss, illness, job loss, relationship changes and those experiencing longer term hardship.

PURPOSE

To ensure that families experiencing hardship are aware of options and support available so that every child has access to educational opportunities and is not disadvantaged or excluded.

IMPLEMENTATION

EARLY IDENTIFICATION THROUGH COMMUNICATION

ENPS understands that at times families may experience financial difficulty or hardship and may find requests for payment stressful. Families are encouraged to contact the Principal for a confidential discussion and plan of support.

STRATEGY TO SUPPORT PARENTS

Early identification is critical in supporting families to manage financial hardship. ENPS may employ such proactive strategies as:

Responsibilities of classroom teachers:

- Ensure students are attending school and monitor any unusual absences
- Ensure students have brought lunch/snacks to school
- Observe any sudden changes to students' health and wellbeing
- Ensure parents from non-English speaking backgrounds understand notices and information or let the office know to organise free translation service
- Communicate with parent any concerns and offer support in a respectful manner
- Confidentially bring any concerns to the Executive Team
- Observe if notices for payment and permission forms e.g. for excursions, camps, activities are not returned and confidentially bring it to the attention of the Business Manager
- Encourage the parent to speak to the Business Manager or Principal confidentially if there appears to be a preference to keep the student home which may indicate hardship

Responsibilities the Administration team:

- Ensure 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
- Ensure those from language backgrounds other than English understand the information or organise a free translation service
- Ensure parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for Booklists (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
- Ensure parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year including camps, excursions and incursions - ensuring parents have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought
- Be sensitive to any change communicated by the parent which may indicate hardship
- Ensure the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel
- Ensure parents experiencing hardship, who have consulted with the Principal, are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next
- ENPS will not use debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents
- Issue only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential items, or optional items accepted by parents, are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the school.

Responsibilities of the Executive Team:

- Ensure staff are aware of the ENPS Hardship Policy
- Ensure parents experiencing hardship are aware of the support available to avoid stress, disengagement and avoidance
- Ensure families feel they can approach the school to discuss their concerns and be supported in a respectful and confidential manner
- Ensure the student's access to educational opportunities is not impacted

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. Families are encouraged to contact the Principal for a confidential discussion and plan of support. ENPS

hardship arrangements include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty and include:

- CSEF
- State Schools Relief
- Payment Plans
- Reduced or subsidised fees
- Waiving of fees
- Reduced, subsidised or waived costs for attendance at excursions/camps/sports at Principal discretion, for those not eligible for CSEF
- Provision of second hand uniform
- Use of school iPads
- Agency funding sought where available

COMMUNICATION

ENPS Hardship Policy will be published on the school website as part of the ENPS Parent Payment Policy at www.enps.vic.edu.au or a copy may be requested from the school office. General enquiries regarding any payment requests can be made to the office in person or by phoning 93793979. All of our staff in the office are able to assist with general enquiries. Concerns should be directed to the Principal, who is able to discuss or answer any queries regarding the Parent Payment Policy or ENPS Booklist.

REVIEW OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

ENPS School Council approves, monitors and reviews annually the Hardship Policy to ensure:

- Access, equity and inclusion
- Affordability
- Engagement and support
- Respect and confidentiality
- Transparency and accountability.

In the review process School Council will identify any factors to be taken into account, including any concerns raised by the school community and will notify any changes to the Hardship Policy annually via the school website www.enps.vic.edu.au and newsletter.

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