

Parent, School & General Payments Policy 2021

13 October 2020 – (Endorsed – VSV Advisory Board – 17 November 2020)



Policy – Identification and Recording

Policy Information

Policy Name:	Parent, School and General Payments Policy 2021
Policy Number:	
Current Version:	November 2020
Purpose:	
Scope:	
Policy Owner:	Brett New, Principal
Policy Author:	
Related policies and legislation:	Virtual School Victoria
Internal procedures guided by this policy:	

Revision History

Revision Date:	Status: (Draft/Final)	Summary of Changes	Prepared/Approved By:	Revision #:
15/11/2018	Draft	Revision/Updates for 2019	Deanna Butler	1.1
15/10/2019	Draft	Revision	Jenny Griffin	2019
13/10/2020	Draft	Revision	Deanna Butler	
17/11/2020	Final	Revision	Deanna Butler	2020

Parent, School and General Payments Policy

PURPOSE

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children and young people 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 the VSV Advisory Board 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 or services that are essential to support the course of instruction

These items include:

- materials that the student takes possession of, curriculum materials
- access to online course materials
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend
- overseas postage

Optional Educational 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, carers and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. camps and excursions
- events, valedictory
- Materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program; music scores,

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.

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

FULL-TIME AND PART TIME STUDENTS

The VSV sets a materials and services charge for students enrolling with us. This charge is used to cover the cost of learning materials, online curriculum access and other consumables.

Students who have listed an overseas postal address on their enrolment application will need to pay an additional charge in order to cover international postage costs.

Additional direct postage cost for students with an overseas address:

\$60 per year; \$30 per semester

All payments are GST free except for the international postage charge. The \$60 charge is GST inclusive. Payment by instalments may be considered in certain circumstances.

COST AND SUPPORT TO PARENTS

When the Advisory Board considers 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:

- 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
- use of debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents is not permitted
- 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.

Funding arrangements for Non-Government Schools

Any state or federal government funding received by Non-Government Schools is not affected if a student enrolls in subjects at the VSV.

The total upfront costs for Non-Government schools from which students enrol in the VSV is \$810 per subject (\$405 per Unit). This amount is made up of a service fee of \$650 per subject (\$325 per Unit) and a materials charge of \$160 per subject (\$80 per Unit).

It is the responsibility of the home school to inform parents/guardians/carers as to whether they expect them to contribute in full or in part to the costs of enrolment with the VSV. In the case that no payment is attached to an application, an invoice will be sent directly to the school. VSV will **NOT** invoice a third party ie parents/guardians/carers, as it is the responsibility of School Principal requesting the enrolment to remit the correct fees to the VSV once the course has commenced. Enrolments from schools will not be accepted by VSV if there is any outstanding money from the previous year.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The total upfront costs for Non-Government Schools from which international students enrol in the VSV is \$1189 per subject (\$594.50 per Unit). This amount is made up of a service fee of \$1029 per subject (\$514.5 per Unit) and a materials charge of \$160 per subject (\$80 per Unit).

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. Principals and the school Advisory Board exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees.

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.

Review of policy implementation

Schools will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy annually as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community.

Family support options

- CSEF

Other support options

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions and an instalment payment option is available if required. A range of support options are available to assist parents, including Centrelink and Youth Allowance.

Refunds

Applications for refunds will be accepted if they are received in writing at least 7 days prior to the date of the course commencement. A standard handling fee of \$30.00 will apply. After the course has commenced, no refunds will apply.

Review Cycle

This Policy shall be reviewed as part of the school's policy review process by the VSV Advisory Board.

Date developed/reviewed	Tabled: VSV Advisory Board; 20 October 2020; Endorsed: VSV Advisory Board; 17 November 2020
Developers	Deanna Butler – Business Manager
Date of next review	November 2021



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