

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Rowville Secondary College

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.

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.

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
- **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 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

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
 - supplementary exam revision guides

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

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

Rowville Secondary College

Parent Payment Policy

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Essential Education Items

Parents/Guardians can be asked to pay for essential education items. These include:

- Essential Excursion Levy – Includes KIOSC, swimming and the Knox Division State School Victoria Sports fees.
- Art & Technology Materials Levies – cooking ingredients, materials for final art & technology products that the students take home or consume,
- ID Cards, picture exchange systems, travel, entry fees, excursions, incursions, school sports and work placements, essential education consumables, combination lock, music workbook
- Materials for learning and teaching where your child consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (eg all electives as outlined in the curriculum handbooks)
- Digital Learning Support – Delivery of high-level online digital services with managed secure content environments with classroom collaboration and extended learning delivery spaces.

Optional Education Items

Optional items are those that are provided in addition to the 'standard curriculum program', and which are offered to all students in each program. These optional education items are to be provided on a **user-pays basis and if parents/guardians choose to access them for their child they will be required to pay for them.**

These items include:

- Rowville Institute of the Arts, Rowville Sports Academy and Maths Science Academy
 - instructional support, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program – eg coaching, guest speakers, incursions and excursions, contribution to additional teaching support
 - extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the 'standard curriculum program' – eg pilates, tournament entrance fees, sports mindfulness & pathways support, physiotherapy services, nutrition support, showcase
 - materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials or services required for the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable – higher quality, faster internet, computer labs at higher specifications
 - school facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the 'standard curriculum program' and not otherwise provided for through the School Resources Package (eg hire of the Performing Arts Centre, dance studios, Rowville Sports Precinct, Green fees, other venues as required, transport to such venues if applicable.
- Instrumental music program tuition and hire/lease of musical instruments
- School magazine, camps and excursions, materials for extra curricular activities, photographs, school run performances, productions and events
- Bus levies
- First aid levy – provision of a registered nurse who provides a higher level of care above the standard requirement to meet the schools duty of care to ensure student safety and provide appropriate first aid

Voluntary Contributions

Rowville Secondary College will invite voluntary financial contributions for the following:

- Contributions to ATO approved and tax deductible funds:
 - Building Trust Fund
 - Library Trust Fund
- Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the College for services such as ground improvement
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the College

Parent details of contribution or non-payment will be confidential.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Specific details for each year's fees will be communicated via Compass during the re-enrolment process each year.

Our preferred payment method is monthly instalments on card (VISA/MasterCard debit or credit cards)

These details are entered onto COMPASS by parents. Other methods available include cash at the general office and direct debit.

Instalments can be altered to suit individual circumstances by calling the Business Manager on 9755 4555

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The Principal and School Council have the responsibility of making sure that no student is disadvantaged if parents/guardians are unable to pay the voluntary contribution.

A range of support options are available including:

- The **CSEF Camps Sports and Excursion Fund** is provided to low income families to assist with the cost of educating their children. Payments are made directly to the College and are tied to the student.
- Access to **State Schools' Relief Committee** support via the Campus Welfare Co-ordinator which can assist with clothing/uniforms. Y7 CSEF recipients are also automatically eligible for a uniform package.

Students will not be treated differently or denied access to the '**standard curriculum program**' on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.

*Participation in non-compulsory, non-curriculum related events or activities may be restricted where payment plans for '**non-standard curriculum programs**', or **optional items**' have not been adhered to. These include Presentation Ball, Central Australia Trip, Formal, Graduation Evening, Production, Overseas or Interstate Trips.*

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Access to student welfare support within the College provides further assistance to students and their families. The Campus Wellbeing Co-ordinator should be contacted to arrange a suitable appointment time, by phone on 9755 4555 or by email rowville.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Parents will be notified in writing of the Student Materials and Services charges and Voluntary Contributions with a clear description of each of the three payment categories.

All items will be accurately costed and details of how the payments and contributions will be spent by the College.

Receipts will be issued for all payments.

Should parents wish to raise any concerns, please contact the Principal by email on rowville.sc@edumail.vic.giv.au or by telephone on 9755 4555.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

School Council 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.

Date of approval by School Council

24/07/2019