

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Chewton 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.

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



Chewton

P r i m a r y S c h o o l

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Parent Payment Policy

Purpose:

- 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.
- To ensure school parent payment policies are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum

Aim:

To ensure 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 or 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.

Implementation:

Parent Payment Categories

Essential education items are those items or services that are 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 and student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, photography, catering)
- 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 lease for take home use
- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes
- class photographs.

Voluntary financial contributions are for those items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, computer upgrades.

Other support options

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist eligible parents, including the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and State Schools Relief Committee support.

Parents facing difficulties are encouraged to contact the school to discuss additional support and options

Communication with families

This policy will be distributed to all families on enrolment and to current families at the end of the term. The policy will also be displayed on the school website

Payment arrangements

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (e.g. a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

Parents have the option of purchasing equivalent Essential Student Learning items themselves following consultation with the school. This does not include activities set by the school.

Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment requests/letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

Option A Full amount at the beginning of Term 1

Option B Payment at the beginning of each Term

Alternative payment options are available through the school and parents are encouraged to discuss these.

- 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 each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.
- Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.
- Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional extras will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued per year to parents and guardians.
- All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.
- Parents and guardians have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardians 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.

Evaluation: This policy will be reviewed by the school council annually, a minimum of 6 weeks before the end of the school year. New charges will be reviewed each year. Date of approval: 25/10/2017



Dear Parent/Guardian

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* provides that instruction in the standard curriculum program is delivered free to all students in Victorian Government schools; this is referred to as 'free instruction'. The Act also grants school councils the power to charge fees for goods and services to support the delivery of free instruction and to raise funds.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the Victorian Curriculum.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development *Parent Payments in Victorian Government Schools* policy provides advice on the different types of payments that schools can request from parents and outlines the procedures and protocols schools must adhere to. This policy is available from the Department's School Policy and Advisory Guide (www.education.vic.gov.au/spag).

School councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payment policy that is compliant with the Department's policy.

There are three areas for which parents may reasonably be requested to make a payment or contribution:

- **essential education items** which parents/guardians pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate (for example, stationery, text books and excursions (travel and entry costs));
- **optional education items** which are offered on a user-pays basis and which parents/guardians may **choose** whether their child accesses or participates in (for example, school magazines or extracurricular programs or activities); and
- **voluntary financial contributions** which parents/guardians may be invited to donate to the school.

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children are provided with essential education items. The school makes every effort to keep the cost of items that need to be purchased at a minimum. Parents/guardians also have the option of providing essential education items themselves.

Alternative payment arrangements are also available through the school, please see Sally.
Please note that financial assistance is available:

- **SSR (State Schools Relief)** is a charitable organisation that assists needy students attending government schools in Victoria with school clothing and footwear. SSR does not assist with school books and requisites. To apply for this assistance or for further information, please see the Sally or Julie
- **Second Hand Uniforms** are available for free or at a very low cost. Please see Sally
- **Uniforms in general** do not all have to have the school logo. You can purchase uniforms from low cost suppliers
- **CSEF (Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund)** CSEF is provided by the Victorian Government to provide assistance for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply. \$125 per year will be paid to eligible primary school students, Payments will go directly to the school and be tied to the student. The CSEF payment is to be used for expenses relating to Camps, Sport and/or Excursions for the benefit of the eligible student. The CSEF payment cannot be used towards voluntary school charges, nor towards books, stationery, school uniforms, before/after school care, music lessons etc. Funds not used in one year can be carried over to the next. To apply for this assistance or for further information, please see Sally.

Consideration of hardship:

If you have any queries or wish to discuss your circumstances and the options available to you, please come and talk to Sally Douglas or Julie Holden

CHEWTON PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES - YEAR 2019

A form MUST be completed for each child as well as signed and dated

Name of child: _____

Please find the itemised list that includes essential education items (those items that your child needs for school) and optional extras (that you can choose whether your child participates in or accesses) and a voluntary section.

We have made every effort to keep the cost and number of items that need to be purchased to a minimum. We also try to ensure that the costs are affordable for all parents. If you will have difficulty making payments please give us a call. Any information about your financial circumstances, payment arrangements or status will be kept strictly confidential. Payment is not due till the first week back of term and you may wish to make instalments.

Essential education items, Prep-6

Item	Specifications	Cost	✓
Stationary	Textas, pencils Writing pencils or pens Rulers Text books	\$55	
Cooking and gardening program	Upkeep of supplies for our kitchen to cater for incidental and formal cooking activities Purchase of food plants for our kitchen garden The school will provide a further subsidy for these activities	\$20	
Cluster and sporting programs transport	Transport costs to and from events in our small schools cluster events and local sporting activities The school will provide a further subsidy for these events	\$20	
Sporting program event fees	All of our interschool events have a cost associated with venue hire, insurance, St Johns ambulance and coordinator costs. The school will provide a further subsidy for these events	\$5	
MARC VAN (Mobile Library Service)	To cover the cost of books replacement and renewal of books. The school will provide a further subsidy for this resource.	\$25	

Note: Parents may choose to provide or purchase some items themselves. If you choose to do this you must consult with the school so that your child has the right items. We will provide a complete list on request.

Optional extras for grade 5-6 student only

Item	Cost	✓
Lease for take home use , Grade 4-6 only. 4-6 students will be allocated a non-share computer and only pay this fee if they take it home.	\$100	

Voluntary financial contributions, Prep-6

Item	Amount: A suggested amount has been added to this section that you may increase or decreases	✓
Grounds Upgrades	\$30	
Computer upgrades	\$20 Grade p-3 \$40 Grade 4-6 (Grade 4-6 students do not share a computer. The real cost per child is \$300-\$400 per year)	

Parent Payment Charges

Essential education items Amount \$ _____

Optional extras Amount \$ _____

Voluntary financial contribution Amount \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Parent Payment Arrangements

Please indicate your preferred method of payment:

Option A (full amount at the beginning of Term 1)

Option B (payment at the beginning of each Term)

I HAVE ENCLOSED PAYMENT OF \$ _____

- **PAYMENT OPTIONS** - The school accepts Cash, Cheque, B'Pay and Direct Deposit. Please see Sally for details. We do not have EFTPOS/Card facilities.

MOST FAMILIES WITH STUDENTS IN GRADE P-2 WILL PAY \$125 PLUS \$50 VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS = \$175 PER STUDENT

MOST FAMILIES WITH STUDENTS IN GRADE 3-6 WILL PAY \$125 PLUS \$70 VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS = \$195 PER STUDENT. THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF \$100 FOR STUDENTS IN GRADE 4-6 WHO TAKE THEIR COMPUTER HOME.

Other known costs for 2019 that will occur:

- Swimming Program: Entry to the Chewton Swimming Pool if you do not have a season's ticket. These are generally at a discounted rate by the time school starts. This rate is less than daily charge.
- Castlemaine State Festival: Students to pay entry only to our day event only. Estimated Cost \$12 per child. School will cover the bus cost. Term 1.
- Grade 6: Grip Leadership: \$37. The school will cover transport and other additional costs : TERM 2
- School Cluster Camps: **Grade 2 Boomerang Holiday Ranch: Estimate \$100**
- **Grade 3-4 Swan Hill: Estimate \$250**
- **Grade 5-6 Anglsea: Estimate \$270**
- There may be other small costs for items such as school excursions to support our inquiry units. We generally try to subsidize these events
- **PLEASE SEE JULIE OR SALLY FOR ANY CLARIFICATION.**

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date / / 2019