

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION



## 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 parents<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 [Policy and Advisory Library](#).

# 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](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

# Brookside College

## Parent Payment Policy

### PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Brookside P-9 College spends considerable time selecting the most appropriate items and services to meet the needs of our students. A list of all items from 2020 along with a description and cost within the three payment categories is attached to this policy (Appendix A). However all items will be reviewed in term 3, 2020 and submitted to School Council for approval for 2021 charges.

### PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Parents and Guardians will be provided with timely written notice (a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year) for all payment requests (including payment options), with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year.

The written communication will clearly identify which of the requested payments are Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Extras or Voluntary Contributions.

All payments received will be receipted promptly through CASES21.

The status and details of any payments/financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel.

When making payment to the College for any transaction, the following payment options will be made available.

- Compass Parent Portal.
- Cash, cheque or EFTPOS in person or via a student at the General Office.
- Credit card in person, over the phone or by other arrangement (credit card details will not be retained).
- BPAY.

### FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The College appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. If required, a range of options are available to assist parents such as:

- State Schools Relief
- Brookside P-9 College hardship fund
- Camps/Sports/Excursions Funding (CSEF)
- Various second hand options (eg. College buy/swap/sell afternoon)

The College will actively encourage families who are eligible for CSEF to apply each year and will assist with the allocation of the funding towards eligible activities.

### CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Parents experiencing hardship are referred to the Student Welfare Team who then liaise with the families to provide financial support. The school has a hardship fund to also assist struggling families.

Classroom teachers/welfare officers are encouraged to report any concerns to the relevant Assistant Principal who will then offer discrete support to the family. Alternatively, families may request to meet with the relevant Assistant Principal at a mutually agreeable time.

### COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

All communication with parents or guardians concerning Essential Student Learning Items and Optional Extras (including requests for payment) will be fair and reasonable. The College will accurately cost and develop a list of payments requested from parents for students at each year level ensuring that payment options are available, easily accessible and easily understood to all parents. All request for payments, whether it be via letter, Cases21 or Compass will be accompanied by the following information:

- A breakdown of what Essential Student Learning Items parents/guardians are required to provide for their students along with advice that they have the option of purchasing these through the College or through another supplier (where appropriate);
- The availability of alternative payment options (including instalments) and an invitation to contact the Business Manager if the parent wishes to discuss these;
- Details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the College.

Family reminder statements will be emailed or mailed to parents direct from CASES21 for Essential Learning Items Items and Optional Extras once per school term.

The College will issue only one request for **Voluntary Financial Contributions** and one reminder notice and will not harass parents to obtain payment. The voluntary nature of this donation will be clearly indicated on the reminder.

A copy of this policy will be available via Compass and the School Website for Parents/Guardians to access at any time.

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

This policy will be reviewed in September of each year as part of the College's review cycle. Feedback will be sought from School Council members in regards to the transparency of processes and engagement with Parents.

**Date of approval by School Council**

**23 June 2020**



## 2020 Essential Education Items & Book Packs

Year 7      Year 8      Year 9

|   |                 |                 |                 |   |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Book Packs 2020                               | \$212.49        | \$202.30        | \$226.38        | Items will vary for each year level, a full list of items for each year level is provided to the parents in November. Included are maths text books, novels, pencils, markers, exercise books, display folders, glue, paper and all other items of stationery required for students throughout the year |
| Diary   | \$13.00         | \$13.00         | \$13.00         |   |
| Padlock                                       |                 |                 |                 | Students will have the option to purchase from the school or bring their own.   |
| ID card                                       | \$4.00          | \$4.00          | \$4.00          |   |
| photocopied notes supplementary to text books | \$30.00         | \$30.00         | \$30.00         | The photocopying of supplementary notes helps support the delivery of those subjects that do not require parents to purchase text books.  |
| Well being Incursions                         | \$38.00         | \$38.00         | \$38.00         | eg.Flourish (social skills program), Drumming to be different ( social skills, inclusivity and building student resilience), Art and Play therapy ( social skills, improving student resiliency and communication skills)   |
| Year 9 Electives (excl Outdoor Ed)            |                 |                 | \$40.00         | Year 9 students will participate in an elective program in their final year at Brookside.   |
| Art   | \$10.00         | \$10.00         |                 | Students will print or produce projects and experiment with a range of materials while exploring the various dimensions of art.   |
| Food Technology                               | \$30.00         | \$30.00         |                 | All Year 7 & 8 students participate in food technology for 1 semester   |
| <b>Total Cost</b>                             | <b>\$125.00</b> | <b>\$125.00</b> | <b>\$125.00</b> |   |