

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 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 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



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

AIM:

To ensure that Brookside P-9 College has consistent and transparent parent payment practices that ensure all children have access to the standard curriculum.

RATIONALE:

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* provides for instruction in the standard curriculum program to be free to all students in Victorian Government schools (referred to as 'free instruction'). This ensures that every child and young person has access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities related to the Victorian Curriculum Standards.

Parent contribution, in all forms, assists the College to provide an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by the school community. Brookside P9 College spends considerable time ensuring that the most appropriate items and services are selected to meet the needs of our students.

This policy ensures that:

- Parent costs are kept to a minimum and are affordable for most families in the school.
- Parents are well informed of costs and payment options by the College.
- Parents and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement whilst maintaining confidentiality.
- Parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent to the College community.
- No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The Department of Education and Training *Parent Payment Policy* provides advice on the different types of payments that schools may request from parents and outlines the procedures and protocols schools must adhere to.

Parent payment categories

Brookside P-9 College will require parents to pay for **Essential Student Learning Items**, being 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. Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the school.

These items include:

- Materials that the individual student takes possession of including in house publications, text books, stationary, book bags.
- Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (eg. Home economics, technology projects, dioramas, build your own kits).
- Essential services associated with, but not considered to be part of, instruction in the standard curriculum that all students are expected to attend (eg travel, entry fees, accommodation for excursions, incursions, school sports).

Brookside P-9 College will provide **Optional items** (non-essential materials and services) in addition to the standard curriculum program. These optional extras are items, activities or services provided on a user-pays basis to support or enhance the standard curriculum and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- Extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (eg. Instrumental music).
- School facilities and equipment not associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).
- School-based performances, productions and events.
- Camps, excursions, incursions, sports.
- Materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basis materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (e.g. The use of more expensive materials).

Brookside P-9 College will invite parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school to make a donation in the form of a **Voluntary Financial Contribution** to the school. This may be in the form of a general voluntary contribution or School Council may nominate a target towards which funds raised from this will be directed eg. Specific grounds improvements, improved library facilities.

When requesting payments from parents, the following will be implemented:

1. Students will not be treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
2. Students will not be excluded from enrolment or advancement to the next level as a condition of payment of Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Extras or Voluntary Financial Contributions.
3. Parents experiencing hardship will not be pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next.

Communication

All communication with parents or guardians concerning Essential Education 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 Education 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 Education 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.

Payment arrangements

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.

Payment Method Options

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.

Other support options

The College appreciates the 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, State schools relief "Click2sell" app, Dobsons second hand uniform website)

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.

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.

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 along with a description and cost within the three payment categories is attached to this policy (Appendix A).

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.

EVALUATION:

This policy was last reviewed by School Council in February 2018.

2019 Essential Education Items & Book Packs

	Prep	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Book Packs	\$110.02	\$111.74	\$95.77	\$108.58	\$109.18	\$88.06	\$89.54	Items will vary for each year level, a full list of items for each year level is provided to parents in November. Included are pencils, markers, exercise books, display folders, glue, paper and all other items of stationery required for students throughout the year

Class projects / inquiry learning	\$100.00	Bulk supplies for items produced in class. This covers the cost of creating learning artifacts such as dioramas, models and other creative designs.
Wellbeing incursions		eg. "Excuse me, I was here first" "No Bull" Brainstorm productions
Specialist Projects (Science, Visual Arts, Performing Arts)		During specialist classes, students will print or produce projects and experiment with a range of materials while exploring these areas. Items may include specialist materials such as clay, cardboard and decorative supplies (ie. glitter, feathers and stick on adornments). Students may also create their own costumes for special performances.
Musical Futures / Brookside Live		All students will participate in an enriched creative arts and digital learning program that will provide them with further opportunities to develop their creative and expressive capacities above the standard curriculum
SAKG / Food technology		Students in Year 3-4 will participate in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Program. Students in Year 5-6 will participate in Food Technology.
Book box		For the storage of books on the student's desk.
ID Card		ID Card
Diary		School diary
Phonics		All students will participate in an enriched creative arts program that will provide them with further opportunities to develop their creative and expressive capacities above the standard
Prep Breakfast		All prep students will take part in a Prep Breakfast in Term 4 to celebrate their first year at school
Digital subscriptions	Online access to a range of Educational applications during class and at home (eg. Mathletics, Reading Eggs)	

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	
Book Packs	\$233.62	\$223.06	\$246.92	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	\$125.00	School Diary
ID card		ID Card
photocopied notes supplementary to text books		The photocopying of supplementary notes helps support the delivery of those subjects that do not require parents to purchase text books. eg. No bull / cyber bullying / respectful relationships / Humanities virtual reality incursion
Incursions		All students will participate in an enriched creative arts and digital learning program that will provide them with further opportunities to develop their creative and expressive capacities above the standard curriculum
Musical Futures / Brookside Live		Year 9 students will participate in an elective program in their final year at Brookside.
Year 9 Electives (excl Outdoor Ed)		Students will print or produce projects and experiment with a range of materials while exploring the various dimensions of art.
Art		All Year 7 & 8 students participate in food technology for 1 semester
Food Technology		
Total Cost		

Additional charges (due to the nature of the programs running):		
Hands on Learning Program (selected Year 3-9 students)	\$50 / semester	Optional
Outdoor Education (Year 9)	\$250 / semester	Optional

Voluntary donation - Parents will be invited to donate to the College (no set amount)

Excursions and camps will be charged to parents as the events are approved by the College.