



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

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.

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.

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



ALBANY RISE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parent Payment Policy

Parent payments are requested to enhance the educational opportunities for students and further enrich the teaching and learning program as we strive to achieve our School Strategic Plan priorities. Parent contributions in all forms are highly valued by school communities as they ensure all students can access a broad range of learning opportunities and support their aspirations.

PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide high quality learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing government funds with approved financial contributions and payments from parents.
- 1.2 To ensure school-level parent payment processes are compliant with the Department's policy requirements.
- 1.3 To support and enrich school's learning and teaching program.

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

2.1 School Council supplements Department of Education funds by requesting payments from parents for the following items:-

- **Essential Student Learning Items** – 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. At ARPS we purchase student stationery supplies and bulk supplies for the classroom for students' use, enabling considerable savings to parents due to our sizeable buying power. Parents may choose to provide the items themselves from an available detailed list, **but only after consultation with the Principal to avoid risk of highlighting any child who is 'different'** e.g. teacher asks children to get out their yellow writing book and a child has a blue one, or the item does not meet the specification. A comprehensive booklist will be provided on request. There will still be a balance of the **Essential Student Learning Items** charge requested should a parent choose to provide the individual stationery items themselves, as ARPS purchases a number of bulk classroom materials, supplies and learning programs including, but not limited to: musical instruments, sports & ICT equipment and art room consumables. We do not ask families to supply this equipment.
- **Optional Items** – those items, activities or services that are offered in addition to or to support and enhance instruction of 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. These include, but are not limited to, camps, excursions, incursions, grade 6 Graduation and Market Day.
- **Voluntary Financial Contributions** – parents can be invited to make a donation to the school for a general or specific purpose. These include, but are not limited to: school grounds projects, Library fund, Building fund. Only the voluntary contributions for the Building and Library Funds are tax deductible.

2.2 Parents will be made aware of the costs associated with Essential and Optional Item payments a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the due date of payment.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

- 2.3 The preferred payment method for all school payments at ARPS is via the Qkr! Payment App. Cash and credit card payments can be made at the school office.
- 2.4 Payment plans are offered via Centrepay instalments through Centrelink and enable parents to avoid financial stress by making payments on a regular basis. Confidential arrangements can be made by calling into the school office to speak with Cathie Fulton, Business Manager or contact by phone (03) 9547-1146 or email albany.rise.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au
- 2.5 Information regarding Centrepay application process will be included in the Newsletter, on the school's website and with the school payment request letter in December.
- 2.6 ARPS will adhere to the following guidelines:
- Ensure parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next
 - Not use debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents.
 - Issue 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 once per term.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

- 2.7 There are a number of support options available for parents which include, but are not limited to:
- Second hand uniform stall, when stock is available.
 - Camps, Sports & Excursion Fund (CSEF) \$125 per student available where the parent holds an eligible Health Care or Pension Card.
 - Victorian Government Prep Uniform package for families eligible for CSEF.
 - State Schools Relief support which provides school uniform and shoes – application process is via the school's Welfare Officer.
 - Centrepay instalment through Centrelink payments.

Information regarding support options is available from the General Office and will be advertised in the school Newsletter, through Tiqbiz and on the school's Website.

- 2.8 ARPS understands that at times, families may experience financial difficulty or hardship and may find requests for payment stressful. Families are encouraged to contact the Principal or Business Manager on 03 9547-1146 or albany.rise.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au for a confidential discussion and plan of support.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

- 2.9 In cases where a family is experiencing hardship our whole school Wellbeing approach will be implemented and confidential contact with the family will be initiated.
- 2.10 All costs and processes associated with parent payments and voluntary contributions will be reasonable, will be defensible in relation to Department of Education requirements and will be within the expectations and capacity of the school community.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- 2.11 ARPS parent Payment Policy along with Frequently Asked Questions will be published on the school website at www.albanyrise-ps.vic.edu.au and parent Contribution requests will be distributed at the beginning of Term 4 each year.
- 2.12 General enquiries regarding the parent Contribution can be made to the office in person or by phone 03 9547-1146. All our friendly staff in the office are able to assist with general enquiries.
- 2.13 Concerns should be directed to Cathie Fulton, Business Manager who will be happy to discuss or answer any queries regarding Parent Payment Contributions.
- 2.14 Invoices for unpaid Essential and Optional Items will be mailed to all parents using Centrepay instalment plans each term with requests for Voluntary Financial Contributions to occur in February each year.
- 2.15 Unpaid Essential Items payments will not result in any detriment by the school to the student or family. Unpaid Optional Item payments may compromise a student's ability to be involved in the optional activity in question.
- 2.16 Receipts are issued to parents immediately upon payment and receipted on CASES21.
- 2.17 Where school payments for Essential Items are not fully paid at the commencement of the school year a confidential payment schedule will be agreed to between parent/s and the school.
- 2.18 No collectors of any type, including debt collectors, will be used to obtain funds from parents or students.
- 2.19 The school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year as a condition of payment or non-payment of any kind.
- 2.20 Payment requests, letters or invoices for Essential Educational Items must be accompanied with access to a copy of this policy.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

2.21 ARPS School Council approves, monitors and reviews annually the Parent payment Policy to ensure:

- Educational value
- Access, equity and inclusion
- Affordability
- Engagement and support
- Respect and confidentiality
- Transparency and accountability

2.22 In the review process School Council will identify any factors to be taken into account, including any concerns raised by the school community and will notify any changes to the Parent Payment Policy annually via the school website www.albanyrise-ps.vic.edu.au and Newsletter.

2.23 The Principal will ensure that all staff are aware of this policy and adhere to it.

References: Refund Policy
Camps, Excursions, Incursions Policy
Engagement, Inclusion and Wellbeing Policy

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpayments.aspx> (includes Frequently Asked Questions FAQs)

Principal:	_____
School Council President:	_____
Date ratified by School Council:	12/10/16
To be reviewed:	2017