

# MANIFOLD HEIGHTS PS PARENT PAYMENTS

## POLICY

### 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 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.

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.

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 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx>

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](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

## Parent Payment Charges

### Essential Student Learning Items - \$140.00 per student

Includes your child's Student Diary, Mathletics & Reading Eggs Online Subscriptions, Photocopied Resources, Assignment & Project Construction Materials and selected Sports activities for Middles and Seniors students.

### Book Lists - Variable

All stationary items required by each year level will be listed online through Vita Office.

### Optional Extras - Variable

The following camps, excursions and activities were held in **2016**. These events are not yet confirmed for 2017, however approximate costs are listed below.

<b>Prep</b>	
<i>Fairy Park</i>	\$11.50
<i>Happy to Be Me Incursion</i>	\$10.00
<i>Minibeast Incursion</i>	\$10.50
<i>Story Teller Incursion</i>	\$10.00
<i>Swimming Program (10 days)</i>	\$85.00

<b>Middles</b>	
<i>Grade 3 Melbourne Zoo</i>	\$30.00
<i>Grade 4 Camp</i>	\$200.00
<i>Scienceworks</i>	\$14.00

<b>Whole School</b>	
<i>African Story Teller</i>	\$6.00
<i>Life Education (Biannually)</i>	\$10.00

<b>Juniors</b>	
<i>Big Day Out</i>	\$25.00
<i>Gymnastics Program</i>	\$27.00
<i>Mad About Science Incursion</i>	\$10.50
<i>Swimming Program (10 days)</i>	\$85.00

<b>Seniors</b>	
<i>Grade 5 Werribee Zoo</i>	\$30.00
<i>Grade 6 Camp</i>	\$300.00
<i>Wheel Talk Incursion</i>	\$7.50
<i>Blue Light Disco</i>	\$5.00

Various Interschool Sports are held throughout the year for students who are successful in proceeding to the next competition level. The approximate costs of these Interschool Sports are between \$2.00 - \$5.00.

### Voluntary Contributions - Variable

Parents and guardians are invited to donate to the School Building Fund (Tax Deductible). Donations to the School Building Fund will help the school to fund building projects around the school. Suggested amounts may include the following: \$20, \$50, \$100 or Other.

### Payment Arrangements and Methods

Payment of the Essential Student Learning Items and Voluntary Contributions can be made directly to Vita Office with the Book Lists online or directly to the school via Qkr, Bpay, Credit Card, Eftpos, Cheque or Cash.

Payment plan options are available for those families experiencing financial difficulty. If you wish to establish a payment plan please contact our Business Manager, Jessie Burney. These discussions are strictly confidential with a focus on supporting students in their learning at the school.

The school is a registered Centrepay Service Provider. Parents in receipt of Centrelink payments can pay their child's education costs by having an amount deducted from their payment and paid

directly to school on a regular basis. Centrepay Deduction Forms are available from the Office or directly from Centrelink. The schools Centrepay CRN is 555 088 803 J. More information can be found at: [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/businesses/centrepay\\_what.htm](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/businesses/centrepay_what.htm)

Parents are welcome to make regular payments via Bpay for upcoming Camps, Excursions and Activities. Amounts can be variable depending on individual family budgets. If you would like further information please contact the school office.

### **Family Support Options**

#### **Second Hand Uniform**

Is available to all families directly through the office.

#### **Camps Sports Excursion Fund (CSEF)**

CSEF is provided by the Victorian Government to assist eligible families to cover the costs of school excursions, camps and sporting activities. If you hold a valid means-tested concession card or are a temporary foster parent, you may be eligible for CSEF. A special consideration category also exists for asylum seeker and refugee families. The allowance is paid to the school to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions or sporting activities for the benefit of your child.

Parents or legal guardians are required to complete a CSEF application form and lodge it with the office for processing. Application forms should be completed and lodged with schools by 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017, as payments are made from March. However schools will be able to accept and process applications up until the end of term two each year. Contact the school office to obtain a CSEF application form or download from [www.education.vic.gov.au/csef](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/csef) . Please ensure a copy of your means-tested concession card is provided with your CSEF application form.

#### **State Schools Relief**

State Schools' Relief offers a simple solution. Their practical service ensures that every student, regardless of their background, can fully participate in education.

Any student who is attending a Victorian Government School is eligible for State Schools' Relief support. Schools can send an application to State Schools' Relief when they believe that there is need to support a student whose family is facing difficulty in providing the appropriate uniform and footwear for school.

Situations include, but are not limited to:

- Health issues resulting in serious financial difficulties
- House Fires where school clothing is lost
- Independent living/ Homelessness
- Natural Disasters
- Serious financial difficulty

#### **Consideration of Hardship**

Manifold Heights Primary School will provide support to parents/carers experiencing hardship. All endeavours will be made not to exclude students simply for financial reasons. Parents experiencing financial difficulty, are invited to discuss their individual situation with the Principal, Assistant Principal or Business Manager. These discussions are strictly confidential with a focus on supporting students in their learning at the school. Decisions relating to alternative payment arrangements will be made via the Business Manager on a case-by-case basis.

**Communication with Families**

This policy and implementation will be communicated to the school community via the school website, school newsletter and 2017 Parent Payments Letter.

Should parents or carers require further clarification they are able to contact the office on 5229 9643 between 8:30am – 4:30pm or via email [manifold.heights.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:manifold.heights.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au) .

**Monitoring and Review of the Implementation of the Policy**

School Council will review annually, as part of the school’s review cycle, the level and purpose of parent payments and voluntary contributions and ensure any changes are consistent with any advice or instruction received from the Department of Education and Training.