

## PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

### Purpose

To ensure that Ripponlea Primary School's 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. Our school council is 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 of which students take possession. Parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the school where practical and appropriate. School Council strongly recommends the purchase of the school supplied stationery pack.

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 will be invited to donate to the school for a general or specific purpose, e.g. school grounds projects, library fund, building projects or for new equipment. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible (Building and Library funds).

The attached diagram "Understanding Parent Payment Categories" provides examples of items and materials under each category.

---

<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.

## **Cost and support to parents**

When Ripponlea Primary School Council consider the proposed requests for parent payments, the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

### **The Principal ensures that:**

- items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- payment requests are broadly itemised within the appropriate category
- although the School Council recommends the bulk purchasing offer, parents are also 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 (e.g. school camps) - 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. The Principal and School Council exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees. There is a range of support options available to support and assist parents. The school Business Manager and Principal assists all parents on a confidential needs basis.

Families experiencing long-term hardship or short-term crisis receive confidential, case-by-case support. As a state government school, Ripponlea Primary School has hardship arrangements that provide 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 Ripponlea Primary School's development of its parent payments policies and plans, School Council invites community members to attend any of the subcommittee meetings of school council of which the finance committee is one as well as respond to requests for feedback.

## Review of Policy Implementation

Ripponlea Primary School monitors the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy annually as part of its ongoing improvement and reports back to the school community.

## Refunds

Ripponlea Primary School will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally we will not be able to refund payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment.

## Appendices

1. Letter re Parent Payments 2020
2. Chart – Understanding Parent Payment Categories

Approved By	School Council
Date Reviewed	Oct 2019
Responsible for Review	Finance Sub-Committee
Review Date	Oct 2020
References	To be updated through DET website when addressed