



Wantirna South Primary School

Parent Payment Policy

Aim

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

Rationale

That 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, decision and resources. This, in turn, informs the parent payment charges approved by school councils that may vary from one school to the next.

Implementation

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, eg. 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, Wantirna South Primary School will adhere to the following principals:

Principals

Educational value: Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when schools determine their parent payment 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 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 parent 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 Wantirna South Primary School Council considers the proposed request for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

The School Principal 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 are 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 (ie. 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 request 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 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. Wantirna South Primary School Council and the Principal 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, Wantirna South Primary School Council 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 Departments [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#)

Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see:

[Frequently Asked Questions- For Parents.](#)

Parent Payment Charges

Wantirna South Primary School selects the appropriate items and services to meet the needs of our students and to support and enrich the school’s learning and teaching program. School Council can request payments from parents/guardians using the following

1. Essential student learning items:

These items include: materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery. Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished article (eg. Art, classroom, science materials). Software licensing for classroom programs over and above standard curriculum based programs.

Parent/guardians may choose to provide equivalent materials themselves in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school

2. Optional Items:

These items include: camps, excursions and incursions. Sports events. Swimming program, Grade 6 Hoodie.



3. **Voluntary financial contributions:**

Contributions made to the Grounds, Building and Library Fund assists in acquiring resources, goods and services not provided for through Government Funding. These contributions maintain the high standard of the existing building, grounds and library for the students and the school community.

Payment Arrangements and Methods

Parent and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment request for essential student education items, optional items and voluntary financial contributions, prior to the end of the previous school year. Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment statement requests issued within the Department Guidelines. Three payment options have been developed:

- Option 1** Full amount on the book collection day in Jan of the school year.
- Option 2** A signed payment instalment plan organised with the school Business Manager.
- Option 3** Alternative payment arrangements as discussed with the school Business Manager and approved by the school Principal.

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.

Family Support Options

A range of support options are available to assist eligible parents experiencing financial difficulties. These include

- Second Hand Uniform donations are regularly made to the school and passed on to families requiring support.
- State School Relief responds to requests from school principals and welfare coordinators to assist in providing uniform, shoes and books to disadvantaged students.
- Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF) provide funds for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply.

Families are encouraged to contact the Business Manager, Principal or Assistant Principal to raise issues and discuss any financial difficulties

Consideration of Hardship

Families experiencing financial difficulties are encouraged to contact Kerri Emonson Assistant Principal via phone, email or in person to discuss personal financial situations.

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 arrangement in respect to payment requests is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short term crisis on a confidential case by case basis.



Communications with Families

The following documents are available on request to the school:

- Wantirna South Primary School Parent Payment Policy
- Parent Payments in Victorian Schools-frequently asked questions
- Financial Assistance for Families
- Understanding Parent Payment Categories

The annual Parent Payment Letter outlining charges for the following year will be accompanied by the DET document "Understanding Parent Payment Categories".

DET documents are available via the website

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/pages/parentpayments.aspx

Monitoring and Review of the Implementation of the Policy

The School Council has the responsibility to ensure that the Parent Payment Policy and processes are compliant with the DET's policy requirement. School Council will comply with the DET requirements of transparency of processes and communication with parents. The three payment categories and the associated costs are reviewed on an annual basis for the coming year and ratified at a School Council meeting to be held in October/November each year prior to communication to parents/guardians. School Council will monitor the implementation of the policy and review 3 yearly or annually if necessary due to changes in regulations.

The policy was ratified by School Council on October 24th 2018.