MANAGEMENT

PARENT/CARER PAYMENTS

GENERAL STATEMENT

This policy provides information regarding parent/carer payments in government schools. The policy covers payments for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions that schools may request, and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests may be made.

This policy ensures that parent payment practices in schools are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

RATIONALE

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of 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.

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.

BROAD GUIDELINES

The Concord School Council can request payments from parents/carers for student materials and services charges and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories:

1. **essential education items** which parents/carers are **required** to pay the school to provide for their child which include class materials and activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend. E.g. excursions and incursions.

2. **optional extras** are items provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students. They are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents/guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. E.g. school photos and functions such as the Presentation Ball.

3. **voluntary financial contributions** which parents/carers may be **invited** to donate to the school. Concord School has Gift Recipient Status. Voluntary contributions paid into the Concord Deductable Gift Register can be claimed as a tax deduction.

IMPLEMENTATION

In implementing this policy, Concord School adheres to the following 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 proposing requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school. Concord School will 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.

Parent payment charges will:
- be clear specification of the Items, description and costs within the three payment categories
- articulate how payment requests support/enrich the school’s learning/teaching program
- Include options to pay in instalments

Voluntary Financial Contributions:
- A letter of thanks will be sent for all received fees

Support for families
Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. Concord School is sensitive to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees. Consideration is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short term crisis on a confidential, case by case basis. Parent/carers are encouraged to discuss alternative payment options with one of the Assistant Principals.

Families who have difficulty paying for essential items can access support through:
- Second hand and low cost options e.g. school clothing pool, low cost suppliers
- CSEF
- State Schools Relief
- Local community supports

REFERENCES
DET School Policy & Advisory Guide Parent Payments
### Understanding Parent Payment Categories

**CONCORD SCHOOL**

**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
  - 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

**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

**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 invite Voluntary Financial Contributions**

- e.g. Building or Library fund (Tax deductible)
- Voluntary contributions for a specific purpose, such as equipment, materials, services.
- General voluntary contributions

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)


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