

	<p>Carlton Gardens Primary School</p> <p>PARENT PAYMENT POLICY</p>	<p>Authorisation 2022 Review 2023</p>
---	---	---

Purpose:

This policy outlines the ways in which school councils can request payments or voluntary contributions from parents and ensures that parent payment practices in schools are consistent, transparent and 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.

Scope:

This policy applies to all parents and carers. International fee-paying students may be exempt from fees and some consumables.

Policy:

Schools provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in Victorian Curriculum F-10, VCE and VCAL.

Schools may invite parents to make a financial contribution to support the school.

Schools can request contributions from parents under three categories,– Curriculum Contributions, Other Contributions and Extra-Curricular Items and Activities.

Curriculum Contributions:

Voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum

Other Contributions:

Voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school’s functions and objectives.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities:

Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum. These are provided on a user-pays basis.

All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the curriculum requirements in the eight key learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in the 8 key learning areas:

1. English
2. Mathematics
3. Sciences (including physics, chemistry and biology)
4. Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
5. The arts
6. Languages
7. Health and physical education
8. Information and communication technology and design and technology.

Free instruction includes 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.

Schools cannot:

- deny students access to the standard curriculum program, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments not being made for education items or activities
- request payments from parents for school operating costs (for example, utility costs) or general and unspecified charges (for example, subject levies)
- cannot withhold student access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payments being made.

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

Schools must:

- have their parent payment arrangements approved by their school council prior to communicating it to parents
- upload their parent payment arrangements onto their school website for transparency

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:

- 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 optional curriculum contribution and other voluntary contribution payments (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
- 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 Extra-Curricular Items and Activities accepted by parents are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the school.

Support for families

Schools have a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents who may be experiencing either short-term or long-term financial hardship.

Schools must:

- ensure costs to parents are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families
- consider the Financial Help for Families Policy and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments for their child
- nominate a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with parent payment arrangements.

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.

Further Information and Resources:

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](#)

Review Cycle and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle.

Approved by Principal

Tina McDougall