

	<p>Carlton Gardens Primary School</p> <p><b>PARENT PAYMENT POLICY</b></p>	<p><b>Authorisation</b> September 2018 <b>Review: 2019</b></p>
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### **Purpose:**

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum and receive the best resources possible for the education of all students.

School Councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories:

- Essential education items
- Optional education items
- Voluntary financial contributions

All administrative and financial processes are compliant with Department of Education and Training (DET) requirements, including CASES21 financial reporting.

### **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.

At Carlton Gardens Primary School, we have high expectations for all our students. We value academic excellence across all areas of the curriculum. We aim to provide exemplary, stimulating programs so that all students can reach their full potential in a safe, supportive environment.

### **What can schools charge for?**

The Education and 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 education items** are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents or guardians are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate.

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 articles (e.g. Art, digital portfolios, photography, catering)

**Optional extras** are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- student computer printing for personal use;
- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes;
- school-based performances, productions and events
- school based activities (camps excursions, incursions etc)

**Voluntary financial contributions** are for those items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, a library or building trust.

### **Cost and Support to Parents**

- The school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.
- Items that students consume or take possession of are to be accurately costed.
- Payment requests must be clearly itemised within each category.
- Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.
- Parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees. (i.e. in Term Four of previous year)
- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged because of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
- All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.
- Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests with a minimum of two weeks notice before the due date of payment.
- Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment requests/letters fair and reasonable. Payment options are available through the school and parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.
- Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional extras will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued per year to parents and guardians.

### **Other support options**

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist eligible parents, including the Schoolkids Bonus, State Schools Relief Committee and the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund.

Parents who have difficulty paying for essential items may make payments by affordable instalments. Families are welcome to discuss a confidential payment plan with the Business Manager if parents are unable to meet the cost of an item.

### **Second-hand Uniform shop**

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education the school operates a second-hand bookstall and second-hand school uniform shop.

### **Implementation:**

This policy ensures that:

- costs are kept to a minimum;
- payment requests are clearly itemised under the three parent payment categories;
- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed;
- no student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution;
- access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level will not be withheld as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.

Carlton Gardens Primary School spends considerable time selecting the most appropriate items and services to meet the needs of our students.

If parents and guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications, quality and of equivalent material provided by the school. There may also be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.

**Evaluation:** This policy was last evaluated by the Finance Committee 2018 and ratified by School Council 2018. It is to be reviewed in 2019.

## School-Level Processes and Procedures

### SCHOOL-LEVEL PROCESSES

#### Communication with Families

All communication with parents/guardians, including payment requests, are to be fair and reasonable. Payment requests, letters or CASES 21 or COMPASS invoices for student materials and services charges must be accompanied by the following information:

- a description of each of the three parent payment categories
- that parents are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier, where appropriate
- the availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the Business Manager if the parent wishes to discuss these
- a copy of the school Parent Payment policy

#### Administrative and Payment Processes

The school-level policy should ensure that:

- Administrative and financial processes are to be compliant with DET requirements such as CASES 21 or COMPASS financial reporting
- Invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and two reminder notices per year is sent to all parents/guardians.
- Receipts are issued to parents upon payment and receipted on CASES 21 or COMPASS

#### Consideration of Hardship – Support Options

A range of support options are available for parents experiencing in paying for essential items including:

- The Camps, Sports Excursion Fund (CSEF) is provided by the government to help with camps, sports and excursion costs and is paid yearly to eligible families and students. The amount is sent to the school and is held as a credit for camps, sports and excursions. Currently the amount is \$125 per year per student for primary students.
- Access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the Business Manager to assist with clothing/uniforms
- There is a second hand uniform shop. Please see the school office for details
- Option to pay in instalments

The principal must exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The principal is to make decisions about how to manage non-payment of essential education items or optional extras on a case-by-case basis. Where families have difficulty making payments, the principal is expected to discuss with them the range of support options available and to negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement such as payment by instalments.

Parents/guardians who experience difficulties providing or paying the school to provide essential education items are encouraged to make an appointment with the principal or nominated parent payment nominee – Joy Meredith (Business Manager) to discuss alternative payment methods.

### RELATED LEGISLATION

*Education and Training reform Act 2006* (sections 2.2.4. (1), 2.3.6 (1) (c). 2.2)

The full Parent Payment policy is available from the DET's School Policy and Advisory Guide – (Parent Payment)