

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## PURPOSE

To ensure that 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. School councils are 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 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, e.g. school grounds projects, library fund or for new equipment. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible.

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<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.

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

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

### 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:

- 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.

### **SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES**

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. 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. 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, 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.

### **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 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](#)

# Understanding Parent Payment Categories

## Schools

### 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 students will consume
  - 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

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 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

#### Items and/or materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum

- e.g.
- use of silver in metal work instead of copper
  - supplementary exam revision guides

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)

Schools can invite **Voluntary Financial Contributions** for



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



# Mordialloc College

## Parent Payment Policy

Mordialloc College is committed to providing the best possible education to all students of the College by offering access to a broad and diverse curriculum.

The major source of funding for the College is through Government provided funds by way of the Student Resource Package (SRP). This funding provides for a **standard curriculum** at the College. In order to ensure that our students have access to a more broad and diverse educational program that provides a range of opportunities and rich learning experiences, we ask for the financial support of families in the form of Year Level Program Curriculum Resources payment to

- ensure that students who attend Mordialloc College receive an education of a commensurate standard and diversity as compared to that being delivered by other schools in the local neighbourhood
- allow all students access to a broad and diverse range of subjects to choose from
- deliver an educational program that provides a range of opportunities and rich learning experiences for all students
- allow subjects offered within the elective component of the school and/or require student consumption or possession of materials to be delivered effectively e.g. Food Technology, Design Technology, Media, Art and Studio Art etc.
- allow students to have access to subjects that cater for particular interests or prepare for particular career areas e.g. Food Technology, Design Technology etc.
- ensure that the school population is not disadvantaged when high cost subjects are offered

Parent Supported Curriculum Resources payment and Subject/Elective charges are divided into the following three categories:

### **1. Essential Educational Items**

These items or services 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 (e.g. lock, planners, and all electives as outlined in the Year Level handbooks)

These items include:

- items which students take possession of, including text books, eBook Bundles and any online subject licences, student stationery, padlock and planner
- materials for learning and teaching where your child consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (for example: food technology, studio arts, electives as outlined in curriculum handbooks)
- school uniform
- travel costs incurred in the course of receiving the instruction from a teacher or other person
- essential services associated with, but not considered to be part of, 'instruction' in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend (for example, transport and entrance costs, lane hire for swimming)

### **2. Optional Extras**

These are items/services provided in addition to the 'standard curriculum program', and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are to be provided on a user-pays basis and if you choose to access them for your child you will be required to pay for them. These items include:

- Extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (for example, instrumental music tuition);
- Selected Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) Program
- Advance Program
- College Production
- Year level camps, music camps, excursions, incursions
- School facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the 'standard curriculum program', and not otherwise provided for through the School Resources Package (for example hire/lease of equipment such as musical instruments or purchase of laptops/iPads)

- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials or services required for the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (for example, the use of more expensive materials)
- Entry fees to school run performances, productions and events;
- VCE formal
- Year 12 Jumper
- Valedictory Dinner

### **3. Voluntary Contributions**

The College does have a voluntary contributions project for 2017.

**This payment is entirely voluntary.** Parents are invited to contribute to the development and maintenance of College Buildings and Facilities.

### **PROCEDURES:**

- Parent/guardians will be provided with sufficient notice to plan for the payment of the Essential Educational Items, Optional Extras and the Voluntary Contribution. They will also be provided with details of how these monies will be spent via a copy of this policy document.
- Parents may pay in a lump sum, by the College suggested payment plan or individual payment plans can be arranged with the Business Manager.
- Initial notice for payment will be mailed to parents/guardians in early November of the year prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- All details of payment or non-payment by parents will remain confidential.
- Invoices for unpaid Essential Educational Items and/or Optional Items accepted by parents will not be generated or distributed more than once a month.
- All students will have access to the standard curriculum.
- Students will not be refused instruction or denied access to the standard curriculum program on the basis of payments not being made for educational items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
- Access to enrolment and advancement to the next year level will not be conditional on the payment of any monies.
- Parents and guardians will be provided with an alternative education program for their children if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp.
- Students withdrawing from camps, excursions, extra-curricular activities will not automatically be entitled to a refund. Where no cost is incurred by the College a **full refund** will be granted. **Partial refund** will be payable if withdrawal is unavoidable – full amount paid by the student, less any administration charge of up to \$20 and any expenses incurred by the College. **No refund** will be payable if the withdrawal is avoidable and the college has incurred the full costs of the excursion/camp, extra-curricular activity.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT**

- In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education Mordialloc College provides information for online services such as Sustainable School Shop for the recycling and trading of school text books, uniforms, calculators and musical instruments.
- The Camps sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF) will provide payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Application forms and information is available on the College Website. At the beginning of Term 1 all parents will be notified either by mail or email advising closing dates for Applications for the year and notification placed in the College Newsletter weekly during Term 1.
- State Schools Relief may cover cost of new school uniforms, shoes, books and more for families who have children in a Victorian Government school and are facing one or more of the following:
  - Health issues resulting in serious financial difficulty

- House fires where school clothing is lost
- Natural disasters
- Serious financial difficulty

Application for assistance through State Schools Relief needs to be directed to the Director of Wellbeing at the College.

Mordialloc College is sensitive to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families and individual payment plans can be arranged, any queries or general enquiries about charges can be raised with the Business Manager.

Ms Yvonne Aird  
Telephone: 9580 1184  
email: aird.yvonne.m1@edumail.vic.gov.au

Should a family be experiencing financial hardship, they are referred to the Director of Wellbeing at the College.

Mrs Diane Douglas  
Telephone: 9580 1184  
email: douglas.diane.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

## **COMMUNICATION**

Mordialloc will email/post a copy of the College Parent Payment Policy annually to all students' families. The Policy is also displayed on our Website under Current Parents - School Policies.

Any general inquiries regarding charges will be directed to the Business Manager on 95801184

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

- Parent Supported Curriculum Resources payment and Subject/Elective charges will be determined on an annual basis by the College Council as part of the annual program budget cycle;
- Classroom items that students consume or take possession of will be carefully sourced to ensure the best possible prices are obtained;
- Parent Supported Curriculum Resources payment and Subject/Elective charges will be used during the school year in which they are requested and will be for the direct and immediate benefit of each student;
- Students, who are not eligible for funding through the Student Resource Package, must enrol as full fee paying students and pay the appropriate Government fee to cover their tuition at the College. These students will be exempt from the additional Parent Supported Curriculum Resources payment and Subject/Elective charges;

**Date of approval by School Council: 3rd November 2016**