



## Family Contributions Policy

### RATIONALE

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 empowers school councils to charge parents for goods and services used in the course of instruction of their children, as well as to raise funds. As the quality and variety of educational programs offered by our school are enhanced by doing so, our School Council requests payment from parents for certain student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions.

### AIMS

- To ensure all students have access to a high quality curriculum with learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing government funds with approved financial contributions and payments from parents.

### GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- School Council supplements Department of Education funds by requesting payments from families for the following items:
  1. Essential Education Items which parents and guardians are required to provide or pay the school to provide - Items that students consume or take possession of, such as stationery, photocopied work, booklists, text books, camps, excursions and incursions. These items will be paid via the annual Book Pack levy and the Family Contribution fee. Camps, swimming and excursions are considered essential education items but are not covered by the annual Parent contribution Fee. These items will be paid for by parents prior to the camp, swimming program or excursion.
  2. Optional Extras which are offered on a user pays basis - parents can choose whether or not their child participates eg. School based performances, instrumental music tuition or hire of instrument or equipment etc.
  3. Voluntary Family Contributions which are non-compulsory – such as donations for specific projects eg. Library, grounds, technology equipment, etc.
- Families will be made aware of the costs associated with payments and voluntary contributions and given early notice of payment requests eg. a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year, along with a recommended payments schedule.
- School Uniform is an essential education item but is not covered by the annual Parent contribution Fee. Parents should provide their child with this through a retail outlet.
- If families choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this should be done 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.
- Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- The payments schedule will include itemised details relating to payments, essential payment dates, options to make payments by instalments, clear definitions of the category of any

payments i.e. Essential, Optional or Voluntary, and advice to parents to contact the Principal if they require support or additional information.

- Where fees are requested for optional extra items, the school will state on the request that such fees are voluntary.
- All payments and non-payments will be strictly confidential. The public identification of students or their parents where payments have or have not been received will not occur.
- All costs and processes associated with parent payments and voluntary contributions will be reasonable, will be defensible in relation to Department of Education requirements, and will be within the expectations of the school community.
- School Council will provide opportunities for all families experiencing financial difficulties to enter into alternative and confidential payments arrangements with the Principal.
- Invoices for unpaid Essential Items and Optional Extra may be mailed monthly.
- Requests for Voluntary Family Contributions may occur in February and July (if required) each year.
- Unpaid Essential Items payments will not result in any detriment by the school to the student or family.
- Unpaid Optional Extras payments may compromise a student's ability to be involved in the optional activity in the future.
- Unpaid Voluntary Family contributions do not constitute a non-payment and will not result in students being treated differently or denied access to the standard curriculum.
- Unpaid voluntary contributions do not constitute outstanding debts. The school may issue a maximum of one reminder notice only for unpaid voluntary contributions.
- Debt collectors eg. from outside organisations will not be used to collect funds from families.
- Families that make donations will receive a letter of appreciation.

## EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the regular policy review cycle. School Council will review the level and purpose of family payments and voluntary contributions annually, and in doing so will be consistent with any advice or instruction received from the Department of Education.

## References:

*Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Sections 2.2.4.(1), 2.3.6 (1)(c), 2.2.

For further information and FAQ.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpayments.aspx>

*Ratified by School Council 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014*