

Dear Parents and Carers, Here is our final Parent Payment Policy for your information.
Regards Chris 11/8/2014

Wooragee Primary School Parent Payments Policy

Rationale:

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program (AusVELS key learning areas), and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

The Department provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) and various programs. This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program.

Aim:

To ensure school-level parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the Department's policy requirements.

Implementation:

School councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payments annually to ensure:

- all students have access to the standard curriculum program
- the three parent payment categories i.e. essential education items, optional extras or voluntary financial contributions are identified
- the school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of any outstanding parent payment
- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- costs are kept to a minimum
- payment requests are clearly itemised within each category
- parents/guardians are given the option of purchasing equivalent essential education items themselves, in consultation with the school
- students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions. For example if parents/guardians choose for their children not to attend a compulsory excursion/camp an alternative option needs to be provided
- the status and details of any payments or non-payments are confidential
- parents are informed of the levies set by school council after they have been ratified.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring:

- the school-level policy complies with the Department's policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it
- any parent payment records are kept confidential
- no collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by schools to obtain any funds from parents/guardians
- parents are provided with early notice of payment requests (e.g. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year)
- payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
- There is no use coercion or harassment to obtain payment from parents/carers

Parent Payment Categories

Essential education items

These are items which parents/guardians pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program and include:

- materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles e.g. Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (SAKG) lunch
- school uniform
- activities associated with, but not part of instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps, incursions and excursions which all students are expected to attend

If parents/carers 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 (e.g. SAKG cooking program lunch) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

Optional extras

These 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.

These items include:

- instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. student lap top rental for home use, Athletics, Reading Eggs, Spellodrome)
- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music, Hip Hop, SAKG Program)
- school-based performances, productions and events
- materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school diary)
- school facilities and equipment not associated with providing the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).

Voluntary financial contributions

Parents/carers, or anyone else can be invited to make a donation to the school for the following purposes:

- contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund (these trust funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)
- contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers, SAKG garden and grounds projects or student-related services
- general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school

Communication with parents

All communication with parents/guardians, including; payment requests will be fair and reasonable.

Payment requests, letters or CASES21 invoices for student materials and services charges will be accompanied by the following information:

- a description of each of the three parent payment categories
- details of what parents are being asked to pay for
- 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 principal if the parent wishes to discuss these
- parent payment policy located on webpage

Administrative and payment processes

- payment arrangements coincide with the timing of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) availability however parents will not be pressured to sign over the EMA
- administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 financial reporting
- invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed twice per term or upon request by families at anytime
- only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice per year will be sent to all parents/guardians
- receipts are issued to parents as soon as practicable upon payment and receipted on CASES 21 (Office Manager works 2 days a week)

Education Maintenance Allowance

The EMA is provided to eligible families to help with the cost of essential education items such as textbooks, stationery, uniforms and excursions.

Parents/guardians who have signed over their EMA cheque to the school will be informed that they:

- have the option of providing essential education items themselves
- can authorise the school to direct the family's EMA towards particular items
- are entitled to know how the EMA is being used for their child's education. Upon request, the principal should therefore advise parents/guardians of the itemised cost of student materials and services on which they propose to spend the EMA.

The EMA cannot be used to offset voluntary financial contributions.

Any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of the year must be returned to the parent unless there is agreement by the parent that this money can be carried over into the next year.

For more information on EMA see: [Education Maintenance Allowance](#)

Other support options

There are a range of other support options available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential items including:

- access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the principal to assist with clothing/uniforms
- welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.

- The Principal must exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The Principal will 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 will 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, should be encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal to discuss alternative payment methods.

Related policies and documentation

- Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents, see: [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Information on the financial assistance options available for parents and students, including the EMA, Youth Allowance Scheme, ABSTUDY and student scholarships, see: [Costs and Financial Assistance](#)
- Financial management, see: [Finance](#)
- Further support, contact the relevant regional office or the School Operations and Governance Unit – Regional Services Group via the School Policy and Advisory Guide email: theguide@edumail.vic.gov.au
- Guidelines for parent/guardian complaints processes, see: [Parent Complaints](#)
- [Parent Payment Support Materials for School Use \(DOC - 732KB\) \(doc - 732kb\)](#)

Related legislation

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

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier as required.

Ratified: July 2014

Review Date: July 2017 or earlier as required