

**COLAC SECONDARY COLLEGE**  
**PARENT PAYMENT POLICY - DET**

**Policy**

This Parent Payments Policy outlines the ways in which school councils can request financial contributions from parents and ensures that parent payment practices in schools are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the Curriculum.

**Summary**

- Victorian government schools must 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 curriculum requirements in the 8 key learning areas as outlined in the Victorian Curriculum F–10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (the Curriculum).
- School councils may request parents make voluntary financial contributions towards the cost of schooling under 2 categories: Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions.
- School councils may invite parents to purchase Extra-Curricular Items and Activities – items, activities and services that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside of the school’s delivery of the Curriculum (including alternative forms of instruction). These are provided on a user-pays basis.
- School councils may invite parents to supply or purchase their own educational items to use and to own. If a student does not provide or purchase their own educational items, the school must ensure the student has free access to what is needed at school to access the school’s delivery of the Curriculum.
- Schools must follow the requirements on finance and communications set out in the guidance.

**Details**

**Free instruction**

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 Curriculum, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

Schools cannot deny students access to the Curriculum, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments and financial contributions not being made. Schools cannot withhold student access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payments being made.

Schools are not required to ensure students have free access to items on a one-to-one basis, however, schools must determine a reasonable level of resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant items for the duration they are required. Schools also need to consider the most appropriate arrangements to facilitate student access to required items.

#### **Parent payment categories**

School councils may request parents make voluntary financial contributions and payments to the school under the following categories. There are no obligations on parents to make any voluntary financial contributions and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if their parents do not contribute.

Refer to the Guidance tab for further information regarding these categories.

#### **Curriculum Contributions**

Curriculum Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum. Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity has been categorised as necessary to the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

#### **Other Contributions**

Other Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives. They can be requested for a broad area of school need or itemised for a clearly explained specific purpose.

### **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are provided on a user-pays basis. They include optional excursions and camps, optional sporting or music programs, and materials that don't relate to the Curriculum such as school magazines.

### **Purchase of educational items for students to own**

School councils may also invite parents to supply or purchase educational items to use and to own. If a parent does not provide or purchase their own educational items, the school must ensure the student has free access to what is needed at school to access the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

### **Financial help 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.

Refer to Financial Help for Families for further information.

### **Implementing the policy in schools**

#### Schools must:

- follow the finance requirements set out in the guidance
- follow the communication requirements set out in the guidance
- use the templates provided by the Department to create and communicate their parent payment arrangements
- follow all monitoring and compliance requirements as directed by the Department.

Schools develop their parent payment arrangements to suit the contextual needs and aspirations of their school community while ensuring their arrangements remain in alignment with this policy.

#### Schools must not:

- refuse instruction of the Curriculum to a student if parents do not make a parent payment or purchase any Extra-Curricular Items and Activities or their own educational items
- discriminate, harass or coerce parents or students in relation to payments
- approach students regarding any payments
- undertake debt recovery activities for any payments
- ask parents to pay for reasonable adjustments for children with a disability

- publish parent payment arrangements and school policies that are inconsistent with these requirements.

## **Refunds**

Schools have the discretion to provide refunds to families and should do so where it is reasonable and fair (for example, if the school has not incurred a cost).

If the school has incurred costs, the school should act reasonably and take into consideration the Financial Help for Families Policy and relevant arrangements, including support for families experiencing hardship. For example, schools should refund families for unavoidable event cancellations if a family experiences a crisis or sudden serious illness and the student can no longer attend the event.

If the school decides to provide a refund, then parents need to agree and advise the school where the refund should be paid. If that agreement cannot be reached, the refund is usually paid into the account from which the money came. Where the payment was made in cash, the school should wait until the parents reach an agreement and advise the school.

## **Definitions**

### **The Curriculum**

The Curriculum is the Victorian Curriculum F–10, Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

### **Related policies**

- Digital Learning in Schools
- Finance Manual — Financial Management for Schools
- Financial Help for Families
- Personal Devices — Access
- School Council — Powers and Functions
- Student Dress Code
- Students with Disability
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) Delivered to Secondary Students

### **Relevant legislation**

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Education Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

## **Contacts**

### **Schools**

For support with the Parent Payments Policy and your school's parent payment arrangements, you can contact the Parent Payments Team on 1800 955 913 or email [parent.payments@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:parent.payments@education.vic.gov.au)

### **Parents**

For general queries about the Parent Payments Policy you can contact the Department's general enquiries line on 1800 338 663 or email [enquiries@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@education.vic.gov.au)

If you have any queries in regards to your school's parent payment arrangements please speak with your school first.

### **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed via DET or more frequently if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.