



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

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 parents¹ 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

¹ 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.

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.

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

In implementing this policy, Wangaratta High School will 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.

Wangaratta High 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" \(attached\)](#).

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.

If you are experiencing financial hardship please contact Barb Patterson (Wangaratta High School's Finance Liaison Officer) on 5723 0500. Barb will work with you to ensure that you feel financially supported.

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

Wangaratta High School 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 \(attached\)](#).

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Wangaratta High School makes every effort to keep the cost and number of items that need to be purchased to a minimum. We also try to ensure that the costs are affordable for all parents.

A list of the school levies including costs for 2020 is attached to this policy.

Lockers

Every student at Wangaratta High School is provided a locker to store their school bag and books. It is compulsory that the student's locker is locked at all time. A lock is provided to all new enrolments at a cost of \$15 which is included on the school levies. If a student requires a replacement lock they can be purchased from the General Office at an additional charge of \$15.

Camps, Sports and Excursions

Each child that attends Wangaratta High School will be charged a \$60 Sports Levy. This levy contributes towards the cost of the pool hire and any transport required. It is an expectation that all students participate in the swimming program.

Throughout 2020, specific year levels and subject areas will arrange camps and excursions which enhance the school based learning. Parents will be provided with full details and costs prior to each activity.

Student participation in excursions and camps will also be subject to payment prior to departure.

Instrumental Music Tuition Program

Students who have elected to nominate and have been selected to participate in the Instrumental Music Tuition Program will be required to pay a \$240 charge in 2020. Payment for Instrumental Music is required by the end of Term 1 2020, to guarantee ongoing participation.

VET In Schools Programs

Students electing to study a VETiS program are required to pay additional charges. Full payment of the program is required upon sign up. The total Materials Cost varies depending upon the program chosen. Specific program information can be provided by our VET Coordinator Libby Walters.

Other Charges

Other charges may be levied throughout the year to cover the cost of providing specialist materials for elective subjects. For example, students undertaking Wood, Textiles, Studio Arts, Media Studies, Visual Communication as an elective will be charged a subject levy.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

When making payment to the College for any transaction, the following payment options will be made available

- COMPASS pay
- Cash, cheque or EFTPOS in person or via a student at the General Office.
- Credit card in person, over the phone or by other arrangement (credit card details will not be retained)
- BPay (Bpay details are indicated on the family financial account)

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

Camps, Sport and Excursion Fund (CSEF)

Parents and guardians, who hold a valid means-tested concession card or are a temporary foster parent, may be eligible for CSEF. This allowance is paid to the school to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions or sporting activities for the benefit of your child/ren.

Schools are required to use the CSEF payment for expenses relating to Camps, Sport and/or Excursions for the benefit of the eligible student.

Some common examples of school-organised programs for which the CSEF payment may be used include:

School camps

Swimming and other school-organised sporting programs.

Outdoor education programs.

Excursions/incursions

The CSEF payment cannot be used towards voluntary school charges, books, stationery, school uniforms, music lessons or other optional items.

The Department of Education and Training state that schools do not require parental approval to use students CSEF money to pay for outstanding CSEF activities. However it is preferred that parents notify the school either via COMPASS or in person when they wish to use these funds.

Students changing schools

If the student transfers to another Victorian school, the default position is that the value of any unspent portion of the CSEF should follow to the student's new school, so that the student has access to the full value of the payment. However, if the unspent portion is of a minimal amount, the schools may agree that the funds are not transferred as long as the new school commits to provide the student with assistance to the value of the unspent amount.

Students leaving the school system

If the student leaves the Victorian school system, the CSEF payment will remain with the school and may be used towards the expenses for other family siblings, or school-incurred costs associated with operating camps, sports or excursion activities for students.

Remaining funds

Any remaining portion of the CSEF not expended by the end of the school year may be carried forward by the school towards the following year's camps, sports and excursions expenses for the eligible child.

State Schools Relief

State Schools' Relief is a not-for-profit organisation that works closely with all government schools across Victoria. Each year State Schools' Relief provides assistance to families experiencing financial disadvantage with school uniforms and footwear.

In 2020 every Year 7 government school student who is a recipient of CSEF automatically qualifies to receive a uniform pack that is provided through State Schools' Relief. Please contact the Wangaratta High School to apply.

Consideration of Hardship

Wangaratta High 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, please contact Barb Pattison to discuss.

REFUNDS

The school must ensure that the provision of services for students ie excursions/incursions, camps and overseas trips do not incur direct costs to the school, nor cause the school to run at a loss. Our refund guidelines ensure for a fair and equitable refund system.

Reasons a refund can occur:

- Cancellations - Should an event be cancelled; refunds to parents/guardians will, in the first instance, be credited to outstanding Essential Educational Items and Optional Extras.
- Students unable to attend - Should a parent/guardian seek a refund of an excursion cost paid to the school because of the inability of the student to attend (for example, because of illness) a refund will be made in accordance with the guidelines as set out below.

Refund Guidelines:

1. Where the school is charged for the provision of a program or service as a bulk cost (for example bus hire) no refund is able to be given.
2. Only under the circumstances where the school is charged for 'attendance on the day' on a 'per head' basis can refunds be given.
3. Where there is a combination of a bulk charge and a per head charge only the 'per head' component is able to be refunded provided the school can obtain a refund from the service provider.
4. All claims for reimbursements must be made in writing to the school's Administration office or email wangaratta.hs@edumail.vic.gov.au within 7 days of the event.
5. When there are no outstanding charges on the parents/guardians account, in accordance with the procedures, a cheque or direct deposit will be made to the account holder. At no time will a refund be made by cash to the account holder or the student.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

This policy will be reviewed annually. Feedback will be sought from Wangaratta High School Council members in regards to the transparency of processes and engagement with Parents.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on October 2019 and is scheduled for review in October 2020.

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

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