Parent Payment Policy

Rationale:
To provide guidelines for the collection of parent payments and to communicate them to the school community

Context:
The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program, and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provides funding to schools for the standard curriculum program which includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS).

All students will have access to enrolment, advancement to the next year level, the standard curriculum program and receive instruction and services. An alternative option will be provided for students if their parents choose for them not to participate in an incursion, excursion or camp.

School Council requests payments from parents for student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories:

1. Essential Education Items which parents and guardians are required to pay the school to provide or provide themselves for their child. These items include:
   - materials that the individual student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery
   - materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finalised articles for (e.g. clay, photography, catering, internet fees, ink cartridges, maths resources, computer paper, tissues / first aid supplies)
   - essential services associated with, but not considered to be a part of, instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport, food, accommodation and entrance costs)

2. Optional Extras are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items include:
   - instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program
   - extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program
   - school-based performances, productions and events
   - materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives
   - materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program
   - school facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the standard curriculum program

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3. Voluntary Financial Contributions which parents and guardians are invited to donate to the school. This invitation for voluntary financial contributions may be 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. This may include additional computers or student-related services
- general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school

Implementation:

School organizational arrangements will ensure that:

- School Council determines parent payment charges annually.
- charges will be kept to a minimum and will not exceed the cost of the relevant materials or services provided to the student.
- a minimum of six weeks notice will be given for essential educational item payments to allow parents and guardians sufficient planning time.
- parents can negotiate a payment plan with the principal or nominee.
- voluntary financial contributions will be sought by initial invitation and only one reminder notice to parents will be issued.
- records of parent payments or contributions will be kept confidential.
- invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month.

Payment requests, letters or CASES 21 invoices for student materials and services charges will be accompanied by the following information:

- parent/guardians are required to provide essential education items for their students, and they 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 details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the school
- a copy of the school-level policy is available upon request

Payment requests or letters to parents/guardians will identify which category the items fall into, i.e. essential education items, optional education items or voluntary financial contributions.

Payment may be requested but not required to make payment prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

Parents/guardians in receipt of the Government’s Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will be advised on the cost of student materials and service charges can be expended.

- The school acknowledges that its portion of the EMA cannot be used to offset voluntary financial contributions.
- Parents have the option to sign over their portion of the EMA cheque.
- Parents may agree that any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of the year will be carried over into the next year or they may have it returned to them

Parents/guardians have the option of purchasing, where appropriate equivalent materials themselves. Parents do this in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed in line with DEECD requirements.