

Parent Payments Policy – School communication to parents

Communicating the Parent Payments Policy to parents

Informing parents

The following talking points will assist schools in explaining the clarified Parent Payments Policy and associated arrangements to their school community.

The talking points may be useful to front office staff in answering questions about the clarified arrangements or in general communication (e.g. websites and newsletters) to inform the school community more broadly.

Schools' local context and experience will differ, so please only use those communication points that are relevant to your school.

General statement

- The Department of Education and Training has sought to clarify the Parent Payments Policy for 2022 to remove any ambiguity relating to parents' financial contributions to schools.
- Changes to how schools request contributions have been made accordingly.

Why are parent payment arrangements different now?

- The Department of Education and Training reviewed parent contribution practices across a significant number of schools last year and found some inconsistency in the way contributions were being requested and managed.
- In recognition of this, the Department has now made changes to how schools seek contributions to align practices across the system and ensure consistency. The intent is to ensure parents and schools use common terminology and have a shared understanding around parent payment arrangements.

What is specifically different?

Parent Payment Categories

- The categories under which contributions will be requested have been changed to align with the purpose of the payment:
 - o **Curriculum Contributions** (previously known as Essential Student Learning Items) support items and activities that help deliver fundamental curriculum or subject learning e.g. General classroom materials and equipment

- o **Other Contributions** (previously known as Voluntary Contributions) support the school's operation and function more generally e.g. Parent communication tools and school building enhancements
- o Payments for **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities** (previously known as Optional Items) provide for items and activities over and above what is needed to deliver fundamental curriculum learning. These *user-pays* contributions enhance the schooling experience for students e.g. Optional camps, excursions and events

A new template for communicating arrangements

- A new template is being used by all schools to communicate parent payment arrangements. The template includes the new category names to clearly define the purpose of parent payment requests and includes a one-page overview of the policy.

New payment procedures

- Internal invoicing and receipt practices have also changed in relation to the way contributions are processed. Schools will no longer send out invoices and statements for **Curriculum** and **Other Contributions**.
- Parents simply view contribution requests at the beginning of the year, then make their contributions using the payment methods provided. Parents may wish to use [*insert your third-party school communication and payment tool here, e.g. Compass*] to manage the payment process.
- Receipts must be issued to families for the contributions that they make directly to the school office. Relevant receipts will be issued for tax deductible donations in compliance with ATO regulations.
- Invoices and statements may be received by parents for **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**. These are often confirmed throughout the year for camps, excursions, special events and other activities or items.

Communicating the voluntary nature and importance of contributions

- **Curriculum** and **Other** contributions are voluntary.
- We continue to value your contributions in supporting our school's programs and resources.
- Your contributions continue to assist us to broaden the educational experience for our students. It has allowed us to provide: [*list specifics for your school*]. Without your contributions, many of these things may not be possible.
- If you are unable or choose not to make financial contributions, your child will not be disadvantaged or denied access to the resources required to deliver the curriculum. We will always provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard Victorian curriculum.

- For **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**, it is up to you whether you wish for your child to have the item/participate in the activity.
- These are optional and provided on a user-pays basis, and so the school will require a parent payment to provide them to individual students.
- For some educational items (e.g. devices, stationery, text books), it make sense for parents to purchase them from a third-party provider, so students can take personal ownership for use at school and/or at home. The school considers the necessity of these items, the cost and preferred suppliers. The school has pre-negotiated discount prices for ...*[list specific examples if you have any]*
- Our school only requests contributions for items that we believe add value to the school experience for students.
- The contributions go specifically towards items and activities that help improve your child's educational experience.

Examples of School Messages to Parents Seeking Contributions

The following communication examples have been drawn from school letters to families from across the school system. They highlight the ways in which different schools are currently articulating to their school communities the importance of voluntary financial contributions.

It is recognised that schools' local context and experience will differ. These examples may be helpful for schools to craft their own unique message to their school communities.

Parent Payment Arrangements Templates Text

The following text is taken from the parent payment arrangements template, available on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Parent Payments Guidance tab](#).

Schools provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard Victorian curriculum and we want to assure you that all contributions are voluntary. Nevertheless, the ongoing support of our families ensures that our school can offer the best possible education and support for our students. We want to thank you for all your support. This has made a huge difference to our school and the programs we can offer.

Example of Messages from Schools

The following samples are messages that schools have included in their parent payment arrangements letters to parents:

School #1

Within our school this support has allowed us to organise and coordinate the best possible programs outside of the traditional teaching and learning classroom structure. These financial contributions assist us with the purchasing of art, music and physical education equipment and resources, which in turn, supports them to be exemplary programs coinciding with our elite classroom teaching of the established subjects such as Reading, Writing and Maths. Other programs which we are able to offer because of your contributions include Bicycle Education, the Senior Drama Program, the Choir, the exemplary Marimba Band, the Sailing Program, and the variety of Welfare Programs such as Puberty and 'Play is the Way'. We are also able to subsidise our swimming program and our celebration days such as Harmony Day, the Bush Dance or the Footy Day and the Winter Solstice and Garden Fair. All of these programs running alongside the traditional classroom teaching and learning programs are imperative so as to provide an effectively balanced and rigorous overall education for your children.

School #2

Within our school this support has allowed us to organise and coordinate rich, extensive programs outside of the traditional teaching and learning programs. Our reading and numeracy materials are very extensive and we are constantly adding new material for teachers to use to support personalised and quality learning.

Our Specialist programs of Art, Music, French and PE are exemplary and your financial contributions assist us with the purchasing of varied art resources, musical instruments including electric guitars, keyboards, drumkits, ukeles and many more. Our fantastic playgrounds, sports oval and outside facilities have all been supported through our combined efforts.

Additional programs we can offer because of your contributions include choir, productions, concerts, art shows, community nights, sports events, different club activities and wellbeing programs such as Play is the Way, robotics and gardening.

These are the programs and events so essential in being able to provide the rich learning opportunities that foster our belief in developing the whole child.

School #3

The environment and resources that we enjoy today represent the contributions made by our parent/carer community over many years. Parent/Carers voluntary contributions make significant difference to the quality of our programs. This financial support ensures that we can continue to provide the excellent range of facilities and resources for your children. Your support in 2021 allowed us to:

- Provide high quality programs and specific subject materials and equipment for: English, Mathematics, Science, Art, Music, Inquiry, Language and PE;
- Maintain and develop the school grounds;
- Ensure the upkeep of our computer devices to enhance learning opportunities;
- Maintain sufficient class sets of books for students to develop their reading skills;
- Provide hands on maths equipment i.e.: measuring materials for teaching purposes;
- Facilitate Literacy and Mathematics online digital subscriptions;
- Deliver a range of sporting equipment and access to the Community Bank Stadium;
- Arrange for individual student supplies and class bulk supplies;
- Offer effective First Aid for all students.

School #4

The contributions of families in the past have allowed us to update our texts and readers to reflect current interests and passions of our students, supply materials to develop our mathematical knowledge and problem-solving skills, purchase materials to support the creativity and exploration in our Arts and Science programs and ensure that all students have access to equipment to develop active and healthy students. These are just some of the wonderful support that have been provided to our students to develop their learning and passion for education.

School #5

Within our school this support has allowed us to provide an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by our school community. The commitment from parents to contribute benefits students and results in improved achievement outcomes, wellbeing and engagement in learning. At XXXX Primary School, we design and develop learning and teaching programs drawing on the best educational knowledge and practices and strive to offer broad and enriched opportunities to students that are above and beyond what is required in the standard curriculum and what is provided for by Government funding.

School #6

Within our school this support has allowed us to maintain our bank of standard and high specification computing equipment in most classrooms; additional teaching and support staff involved in programs such as after school tutoring, careers counselling, student support services and technical assistance in the theatre for classes, and for performing arts events staged during the year; a wider offering of subjects and special curriculum experiences such as the Immersion program.

School #7

Our School Council is proud of the excellent quality of our facilities and resources available for our students to enjoy and few schools match the numerous programs we offer to cater for students' needs and interests. However, these do not come without some extra costs involved.

Each year XXXX College parents show positive support for the school through parent payments and fundraising efforts. This support has led to considerable improvements being carried out, especially in the areas of computer technology, numeracy and literacy, and through the provision of outstanding resources.

Schools #8

Within our school this support has allowed us to continue to provide a differentiated curriculum that responds to the learning of all students, provide essential learning resources to students, renew and enhance the provision of digital technology including robotics throughout the school, improve assessment practices to ensure teaching is targeted to a student's next learning step, establish the STEM Garden as focus for practical exploration of mathematics, upgrade the landscaping in the lower playground and rollout interactive televisions to support teaching and learning.