



Werribee Primary School Parent/Guardian Payment Policy

Background

This policy is governed by the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act) which provides for free instruction in the standard curriculum program to all students in government schools. 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 program refers to the eight key learning areas. The standard curriculum for years F-10 means the implementation of the [Victorian Curriculum F-10](#).

The Department allocates funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP). This includes funding for the standard curriculum program, including associated administration, equipment, facilities and operational costs. The Act also empowers School Councils to charge parents for items that the school provides or makes available to the student. School Council may also ask parents to make a voluntary financial contribution to the school for a stated purpose.

Rationale

The Victorian community shares a vision to build an education system that champions equity and excellence and ensures that every child and young person is supported to learn. Underpinning each school's vision for excellence is a commitment that all Victorian students have access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstance, and that no one is left behind. This enables an approach to educational achievement, engagement and wellbeing which draws on the best evidence and is responsive to local circumstances and need.

Schools work in close partnership with parents and the broader school community to provide the best educational opportunities and outcomes for students both inside and outside the classroom. Through this partnership, parents understand that the contribution they make to their children's education, in all its various forms, has an important role in enriching the schools learning and teaching program and improving educational outcomes. The commitment from parents to contribute benefits students and results in improved achievement outcomes, wellbeing and engagement in learning. This is why parent contribution is highly valued by school communities.

Schools design and develop their 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. Learning and teaching programs vary across schools to reflect the priorities, decisions and needs of each school and this, in turn, informs the fees set by School Councils. Schools are best placed to make decisions about their learning and teaching program and how to ensure there is equity and access to education for all students as well as a robust and comprehensive learning program that supports student aspirations.

Schools are committed to creating positive, connected school communities and implementing good practices form part of this commitment. With regard to parent payments, this includes consideration of how parent payments are set, clearly communicating how decisions are made and recognising that some families experiencing hardship may need additional consideration and support. Schools will establish clear expectations and provide supports that promote inclusion and strengthen partnerships with parents and the school community to continue improving student outcomes, wellbeing and engagement.

Purpose

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

To ensure Werribee Primary School complies with the legislative requirements of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

To ensure that parent payment practices at Werribee Primary School are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

In implementing this policy Werribee Primary School will adhere to the following principles:

- educational value: student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when we determine our 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

Access to education

Students are not denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made for education items or services.

Where a child cannot participate in an essential activity or provide an essential student learning item, the school considers the financial hardship circumstances of the student or makes alternative arrangements that provides for the required knowledge and skills to be learned. This is to ensure all students learn the required content necessary to meet the achievement standards in the standard curriculum program.

Implementation

This policy will ensure that:

- items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- payment requests for goods, services and other items provided by the school to students 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 (ie a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year). This enables parents to plan and budget accordingly
- parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year – ensuring that 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 payments from one year to the next
- the use of debt collectors of any type to obtain any outstanding 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 arrangements with the school.
- the school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories
- payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
- initial payment requests and letters to parents for student materials and services charges must be accompanied by the following information:
 - a description of each of the three parent payment categories
 - the materials and activities that parents are being asked to pay for
 - that parents are expected to provide Essential Student Learning 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 or nominated parent payment contact person, if the parent wishes to discuss the payments further
 - a copy or link to the Parent Payment Policy and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES21 financial reporting and that:
 - prior to generating reminder notices to parents for unpaid items, discretion should be exercised with families where there may be hardship or financial difficulty



- invoices/statements for unpaid essential student learning items or optional items accepted by parents can be generated and distributed according to parent payment arrangements, but no more than monthly
- only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice per year is sent to all parents
- receipts are issued to parents immediately upon payment and receipted on CASES21
- all documents relating to individual parent payments are stored confidentially in a secure location and accessible only to the principal, business manager and other nominated staff ensuring identifiable parent information is kept confidential.

Parent payment categories

Schools can request payments from parents under three categories: Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items or Voluntary Financial Contributions.

Each school determines whether an item, activity or service is an Essential Student Learning Item or an Optional Item within the context of their distinct learning and teaching program.

Essential Student Learning Items

These are items, activities or services that the school deems **essential** to student learning in the standard curriculum. Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own.

Examples are:

- items that the student takes temporary or permanent possession of such as text books, student stationery, book bags
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. technology projects, workbooks, photography)
- school uniform (where applicable)
- activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend, such as costs associated with excursions

Note: If parents choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this must be done in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items that, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

Optional Items

These are items or services that are **optional** and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students may access these on a user pays basis. These items include:

- activities the student purchases (e.g. fees for extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum such as instrumental music tuition; fees for guest speakers; optional camps and excursions; entry fees to school-based performances, productions and events)
- items the student purchases or hires (e.g. school magazines; class photos; graduation functions; materials for extracurricular activities; student accident insurance)
- items and materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum (e.g. use of silver in metal work instead of copper)

Voluntary Financial Contributions

Parents, or anyone else, can be invited to make a **voluntary** contribution or donation to the school for the following purposes:

- 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 or student-related services. These contributions are NOT tax deductible
- general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school. These contributions or donations are NOT tax deductible



Parent Payment Charges 2018

Parent Payment Charges are to be decided on and approved by School Council members.

- Essential Student Learning Items

The Arts – Visual Arts	\$30.00
Assessment	\$15.00
Computer Materials	\$22.00
Classroom Materials	\$40.00
English	\$21.50
Maths (inc Mathletics)	\$21.50
	\$150.00

	Stationary Pack
Foundation	\$96.10
Year 1	\$75.90
Year 2	\$82.80
Year 3	\$58.50
Year 4	\$61.50
Year 5	\$71.50
Year 6	\$71.00

- Voluntary Financial Contributions

ICT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Buildings and Grounds	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Library	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Payment Arrangements And Methods

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees. Parent Payment letters will be sent home a minimum of six weeks prior to the end of the school year. This enables parents to save and budget accordingly.

To assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

- Option A Full amount at the beginning of Term 1 (or earlier)
- Option B Payment at the beginning of each Term
- Option C Half yearly payment (beginning of Terms 1 & 3)
- Option D Other payment arrangements

Payment can be made using any of the following methods:

- Cash/Cheque at front office
- BPAY
- Credit Card / Debit Card at front office
- Credit Card (over the phone)
- Direct Deposit

Family Support Options

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. Werribee Primary School staff will 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 for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential student learning items. An outline of the support options are available on the attached: **“Cost support for families”** and includes:



- access to State Schools' Relief support via the Principal to assist with uniforms and shoes
- the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF), which is available for eligible families, to cover the costs of school trips, camps and sporting activities
- welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.

Consideration of Hardship

Consideration of hardship arrangements and concessions in respect to payment requests are provided to families experiencing long term financial hardship or short term crisis on a confidential, case by case basis.

Consideration must be given to the impact on the student and any determination must ensure that outcomes for the student are kept at the forefront of decision-making. This approach provides for an individualised, family-centered and student outcomes focus that necessarily requires thoughtful consideration of each situation.

Flexible parent payment plans can be arranged that enable payments to be made more progressively and if necessary, payment period and amounts can be renegotiated and varied. Parents are encouraged to contact Office Staff by phone 9742 6659, email werribee.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au or in person to arrange a meeting to discuss their financial situation and related difficulties in making payments. Every effort will be made to support students and parents experiencing difficulty with payments.

Communication With Families

Werribee Primary School will communicate the Parent/Guardian Payment Policy to the school community as follows:

- Permanently on our Website under two headings – 'Policies' and 'Parent Payments'
- Attached to an email alert
- A copy will be sent home to parents via their child with the 2018 Booklist Letter by Friday 10th November 2017.

If parents wish to raise any issues or make general inquiries about charges they will be encouraged contact the school by phone on 9742 6659 or email werribee.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au .

Monitoring And Review Of The Implementation Of The Policy

School Council has the responsibility to monitor the implementation of this policy. In doing so, it will focus on the following:

- Transparency of processes
- Communication and Engagement with the school community
- Outcome of hardship cases

The Parent Payment Policy will be reviewed as part of the school's annual financial policy review cycle or when advised by DET of departmental policy changes.

This policy was ratified by School Council on 10 November 2017

Next review Due: November 2018

Reference:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx



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



Cost Support for Families

There are a range of different support options available for all families to help make the costs of education more affordable.

Second-Hand Strategies

- A school-based uniform shop that sells second-hand items – open once a month on Tuesday mornings. See the school website for dates and times.
- Online platforms, such as:
 - [State Schools' Relief clk2sell app](#)
 - www.sustainableschoolshop.com.au
 - trading websites (e.g. gumtree) or social media networks (e.g. private Facebook groups)

Government Assistance Programs

- The **Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund** provides payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply and a Special Consideration eligibility category also exists.
- **State Schools' Relief** may cover the cost of new school uniforms and shoes for disadvantaged students. State Schools' Relief only responds to requests from school principals, assistant principals or welfare coordinators. Parents or Carers who are struggling need to make an appointment with the school to discuss their situation.
- **Student Scholarships** are generally awarded on the basis of academic achievement, participation in the school and local community, or financial need, but are not limited to these. The Department of Education and Training administers 35 different student scholarships, equating to approximately 250 scholarship awards as some scholarships have more than one award.

Community Assistance

Information Services

- **Crisis Referral Information System (CRIS) Online Directory** provides a broad range of information for people seeking welfare assistance, advice and general referral and support. The online directory contains comprehensive information on services and organisations such as those providing support in respect to accommodation, domestic violence, drug & alcohol treatment, health, material aid and mental health.
- **Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic)** is the peak body representing local community information and support services. Its member agencies assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services including emergency relief.
- **Emergency Relief (ER) Victoria** is the peak body for the Victorian emergency relief sector, with over 100 member organisations offering material aid and support to families experiencing a financial crisis or emergency.
- **Financial Counselling Victoria (FCV)** is a non-profit organisation providing financial counselling through advocacy and information to disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community. FCV can provide advice over the phone, email or in person and can assist with referrals to other community and government support such as legal advice, material aid, and emergency relief.

Community Assistance Programs

- **School Breakfast clubs**
Wednesday mornings 8.30 am at the Werribee Primary School Canteen
- **Saver Plus** is an initiative of Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ, delivered locally by community organisations in 22 locations in Victoria. Saver Plus assists individuals and families on lower incomes to have every dollar up to \$500 saved over a 10-month period matched by ANZ to go towards education-related costs.
- **The Smith Family's 'Learning for Life program'** provides financial support, guidance and mentoring for disadvantaged students. The Smith Family works with a select number of schools and may require referral from the school principal.



- **Travellers Aid Australia's Pathways to Education program** provides student travel passes to young people experiencing financial difficulties, enabling them to travel to school or other forms of training and education. The program is limited to students who attend secondary education in an alternative setting, namely community schools and secondary education at a tertiary institution.
- **A Start in Life** is an Australian charity based in New South Wales that provides assistance to disadvantaged students from kindergarten through to tertiary studies.
- **Good Shepherd Microfinance** provides affordable financial programs for people on low or limited incomes that may assist families to afford educational costs and other expenses. The **No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)** provides access to fair and safe credit (up to \$1,200) for the purchase of essential goods and services delivered through a network of local community organisations in 650 locations across Australia, including through Financial Counselling Victoria and Travellers Aid.

Commonwealth Family Assistance

The Commonwealth Government provides a range of payments and services to help families look after their children's health, education and other family issues.

- The Child Care Benefit helps eligible families with the cost of outside school hours care, vacation care and registered care. For more information about eligibility and making claims, see Centrelink: [Child Care Benefit](#)
- To be eligible for either of the Family Tax Benefits, A or B, or a Parenting Payment, families must meet an income test. For more information, see: [Centrelink: Families](#)
- Depending on family circumstances, young people between 15 and 24 years of age may be eligible for [Youth Allowance](#), [Newstart Allowance](#) or [ABSTUDY](#). These payments provide financial support while young people are looking for work, studying, training or undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship.
- [Health Care Card](#) provides help with the with the cost of prescription medicine under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Commonwealth-funded medical services, and access to state, territory and local government concessions. Families may be eligible for a Health Care Card if they receive specific Commonwealth payments or supplements or the maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit A.
- [Centrepay](#) is a free, voluntary service for Centrelink customers to pay expenses as regular deductions from their Centrelink payments. Centrepay can help families to pay for many types of bills, such as education fees and expenses, child care, rent, electricity, gas and water bills, or medical services.

Additional Information

- **Ardoch School Costs Guide 2016**
- Ardoch Youth Foundation has published a comprehensive list of support options available to provide financial assistance to families and reduce school costs.
- **Reducing School Costs**
- Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC) Money Smart website has some helpful recommendations of how to reduce school costs and includes a comprehensive online budget planner to help families work out their school expenses.