



ASCOT VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT/GUARDIAN PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Approved by SC 21 October, 2019

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 parents 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

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, schools must 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 judgment 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.

Ascot Vale PS will 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. This may consist of a reminder in the newsletter before the end of the financial 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. Ascot Vale PS 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 to support and assist parents. These can be accessed through **"Cost support for families."**

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. Ascot Vale PS has hardship arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty. All parents are provided the name and contact details of a nominated parent payment contact person at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with. This information is communicated through the school newsletter and correspondence pertaining to parent payments.

Engaging with parents

In respect to each school's development of its parent payments, the school council, via the finance committee, 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.

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

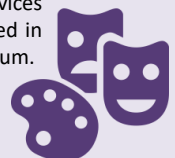
- e.g.
- school magazines, class photos
 - functions, formals, graduation dinners
 - materials for extra curricular programs
 - student accident insurance

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

Ascot Vale PS Parent Payment Charges

Each family will receive a separate student charge sheet that outlines our suite of charges for each year level in the following categories:

ESSENTIAL STUDENT LEARNING ITEMS

PART 1 – Essential Student Learning Items

OPTIONAL EDUCATION ITEMS

PART 2 - Excursions and Sport

PART 3 – Camp

PART 4 – Moonee Vale Instrumental Music Program (MVIMP)

PART 5 – Voluntary Contributions

Each of these categories are explained in detail below.

PART 1 - Essential Student Learning Items

This charge covers those items, activities or services that are essential to support student learning of the standard curriculum. These cover expenses for each child in the following categories:

- \$180.00- Essential Students Learning Items. These include classroom and specialist program supplies such as (but not limited to) stationary and craft items; paper, pencils, pens, markers, glue, scissors as well as school wide literacy and numeracy programs.
- \$17.00- Recorder -required once only for year Prep and year 1 students

All families are expected to pay the 2020 Essential Student Learning Items listed on the charge sheet.

PARTS 2 - 5 - Optional Education Items

These are 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 their child or children, they are required to pay for them.

The school relies on these payments to offer 'value-add' programs and these must be paid on time for children to participate. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact office staff if they have queries about these programs or to arrange a payment plan.

PART 2 - Excursions / Sport/PE / Swimming – Throughout the year, children will have the opportunity to be involved in the following programs which incur additional costs:

a. Excursions / Incursions

This includes excursions (out of school activities) and/or incursions (in school activities) related to the learning focus in classrooms that are organised by classroom teachers.

- Costs will be charged separately in 2020

b. Sport/PE Levy

Payment for sport and PE activities outlined below are due at the beginning of the school year:

- \$25.00 for Years P-1-2 –covers costs for dance
- \$50 for Years 3-4 - covers costs for dance, athletics & cricket carnival
- \$127.00 for Years 5-6 – covers dance, athletics and interschool sports

Levies are **non-refundable** except in the event that families leave the school unexpectedly throughout the year and funds remain unspent or allocated

c. Swimming

Swimming lessons are an important part of the school's program and run over a two-week period. The lessons will be provided by trained instructors at the Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre in 2020. Parents/guardians will receive a permission form and further information regarding swimming in the term before lessons start.

- \$ TBC per student

Prior to each activity in any of these categories, parents will receive a note outlining details of the excursion, incursion, Sport/PE or Swimming activity, requesting permission for their child to attend.

PART 3 - Camp - \$50.00 will be collected from students in years 3-4 as a deposit towards the 2020 camp. \$100.00 Deposits will be collected for the 2020 Year 5 /6 Camp to Canberra from 2019.

PART 4 - Moonee Vale Instrumental Music Program (MVIMP)

This is a user pays program offering students in years 3 – 6 the opportunity to learn an instrument (woodwind, brass, strings, percussion, bass guitar) and perform as part of a group. Lessons are provided weekly with two concerts and other performances throughout the year. Year 5 and 6 students may also have the opportunity to attend music camp once during their time in the program. Camp attendance will incur an additional cost. Information regarding tuition costs and organisation is provided at the beginning of the school year.

Students will not be able to attend activities if payments for Parts 2-4 Optional Items have not been received or a payment plan arranged with office staff prior to the activity taking place.

PART 5 - Voluntary Financial Contributions

Parents are invited to make voluntary contributions to the following school funds:

- a. Building Trust Fund
- b. Library Trust Fund
- c. Student Sponsorship
- d. Working Bee

Please note:

- Voluntary contributions paid into the **Library Fund** or the **Building Fund** accounts are tax deductible. Please retain your receipt for tax purposes. These voluntary contributions assist the school in maintaining our facilities and purchasing books.
- The **Student Sponsorship** option enables AVPS to subsidise camps, excursions and sporting events for eligible families. These valuable donations ensure children do not miss participating in important school and learning experiences.
- The **Working Bee** contribution is available for parents who would like to assist but are not available to attend our scheduled working bees during the year. If parents cannot attend and are not involved in other voluntary work at the school, they may choose to make a working bee contribution.

Parent / guardians are encouraged to choose the amount on the charges sheet if they wish to pay any of the voluntary contributions. Donations are very much appreciated by the school.

Support for Families

There are a range of different support options available for all families to help make the costs of education more affordable to them at Ascot Vale PS and to encourage children's participation in important school events. These include:

1. **Lowering the cost of essential student learning items where possible.** Ascot Vale PS endeavours to seek competitive supplier costs and to minimise excursion costs where possible through walking or taking public transport between locations.
2. **Second hand strategies.** The school runs a successful second hand school uniform shop where 'pre-loved' items are donated and are available for sale for a gold coin donation.
3. **School Assistance.** The school can assist families by establishing payment plans for the purchase of items, such as iPads, if necessary.
4. **Student Sponsorship.** The school is able to provide subsidies for camps, excursions or sport to eligible students due to the generous donations of AVPS families.
5. **Government Assistance Programs.**

- a. The [Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund \(CSEF\)](#) to the value of \$125.00 provides payments for eligible students to go towards the cost of 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. Please note, if a child leaves AVPS throughout the year, the remainder of their unspent CSEF will be transferred to their next school.
 - b. [State Schools' Relief](#) may cover the cost of new school uniforms, shoes, books and more 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.
6. **Community Assistance.** The school is able to provide families with links with local services and welfare groups which can provide specialist support and assistance to students and families in financial crisis. The school also provides a student sponsorship program to assist such families in need.
7. **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. Please contact our office staff to arrange assistance if necessary.

Communication with families

Families will receive a student charges sheet and accompany explanations of our suite of payments at the end of the school year. Payments will be accepted online via Compass or in person at the office in the new school year. Families will be reminded about our student charges arrangements via the newsletter and compass alerts.

Statements will be sent home throughout the year, enabling parents to check and monitor all payments. Please note, Part 5 – Voluntary Contributions will not be listed on these statements. Accounts are requested to be settled as soon as possible in the New Year or term to enable programs to run smoothly.

Monitoring and review of the implementation of the policy

Ascot Vale PS will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy at least annually (term 4), via the finance sub-committee of school council. This committee will continue to monitor and oversee the collection and expenditure of all student charges throughout the year. Policy and charges updates will be reported to the school community via the newsletter and compass alerts.

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](#)

Date of approval by School Council: 21st October 2019