



## PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

### THE LAKES SOUTH MORANG COLLEGE

#### **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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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 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.

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.”](#)

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.

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.

### **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:**

Schools 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.](#)

# 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](http://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



# THE LAKES SOUTH MORANG COLLEGE

## PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

### Parent Payment Charges, Arrangements and Methods

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items including school provided iPads, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

Payments are kept to a minimum with payment requests and letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

- Option A                      Full amount, with a discount of \$50 if received by Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.
- Option B                      Full payment from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019
- Option C                      Payment Plan arrangements

### Curriculum Charges 2019:

Prep to Year 6 - \$350  
Year 7 to 9 - \$400

The \$50 discount will be applicable upon receipt of full payment by Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. Payment Plans are available to parents for curriculum charges.

### Academy Payments 2019:

**Year 7-9 Academies** - \$600 (\$550 with discount) including all curriculum charges:

- \$200 deposit required by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2018
- Further payment of \$100 due by Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018.
- Balance due by Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

-Students are only eligible to participate in Academies on receipt of all required payments.

-Academy uniforms will be ordered based upon payment being up to date by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

***NOTE: Payment plans available for academies balances only. Deposits must be paid in full by due dates.***

- The receipt of the curriculum charges covers the elective fees, with the exception of Academies and Outdoor Education.
- Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Payment requests or letters to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.
- Receipts will be issued to parents. Statements are available upon request.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions will be issued to parents and guardians.
- All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

### **Optional Elective classes for Year 8 & 9**

Optional Elective classes for Year 8 & 9 students have an individual charge based on specific requisites for each class. These costs cover materials, class resources and guest speakers. Students who choose an optional elective will be required to pay the cost by the due date to confirm placements. Semester 1 payment due date is Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018, Semester 2 payment is due by Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

### **Family Support Options**

- Camps, Sports & Excursion Fund (CSEF) of up to \$200 may be used towards Academy, Outdoor Education and Try-A-Trade charges for eligible Health Care Card holders.
- Access to State School's Relief Fund where determined by the Principal and Welfare Officers
- Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

### **Consideration of Hardship**

If parents and guardians are unable to provide school materials, they are encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal to discuss and review opportunities that allow for students to have access to Essential Education Items. No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

The Principal will work in conjunction with the Welfare Officers and the Business Manager to determine a suitable payment plan that is supportive of the family and the school. The Principal will liaise with Welfare Officers in regards to families who may require support and have not contacted the school. In this instance, these families may be discreetly contacted and support will be offered.

### **Communication with Families**

- Information regarding the implementation of the Parent Payment Policy will be published in the school newsletter, on the school Facebook page, website and as part of the Sentral parent portal.
- The Finance Sub Committee and School Council play a large role in the monitoring and review of the policy and consider parent feedback as part of the sub committee and School Council process. All families are welcome to attend sub committees and School Council as a guest or nominated representative.

### **Monitoring and Review of the Implementation of the Policy**

Finance Sub Committee and School Council will monitor and review the policy as part of the school's three year review cycle. Approved and updated policies will be published in the School Newsletter as part of the School Council News and will replace previous policies located on the website and parent portal.

### **References:**

- Release of New Parent Payment Policy in School Policy Advisory Guide – July 2016

### **Evaluation:**

- This policy will be reviewed yearly.

This policy has been ratified by School Council on 28/07/2015

This policy has been ratified by School Council on 17/05/2016.

This policy has been ratified by School Council on 26/07/2016.

This policy has been ratified by School Council on 28/11/2017.

This policy has been ratified by School Council on 14/08/2018.

***The Lakes South Morang College Child Safety Statement:***

*To thrive, children need a safe and supportive environment at school, at home and in the broader community; no exceptions. At The Lakes South Morang College, we believe meeting the physical and emotional needs of our students is paramount in laying the foundations for a fulfilling future. We pledge to provide an environment that has zero tolerance to child abuse and will strive to work in partnership with our parents and community members to keep our students safe every day, in every way.*