



Education  
and Training

## **PARENT PAYMENT POLICY**

### **Free instruction**

All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in the 8 key learning areas:

1. English
2. Mathematics
3. Sciences (including physics, chemistry and biology)
4. Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
5. The arts
6. Languages
7. Health and physical education
8. Information and communication technology and design and technology.

Free instruction includes the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the Curriculum, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

Schools cannot deny students access to the Curriculum, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments and financial contributions not being made. Schools cannot withhold student access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payments being made.

Schools are not required to ensure students have free access to items on a one-to-one basis, however, schools must determine a reasonable level of resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant items for the duration they are required. Schools also need to consider the most appropriate arrangements to facilitate student access to required items.

## **Parent payment categories**

School councils may request parents make voluntary financial contributions and payments to the school under the following categories. There are no obligations on parents to make any voluntary financial contributions and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if their parents do not contribute.

Refer to the Guidance tab for further information regarding these categories.

### **Curriculum Contributions**

Curriculum Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum. Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity has been categorised as necessary to the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

### **Other Contributions**

Other Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives. They can be requested for a broad area of school need or itemised for a clearly explained specific purpose.

### **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are provided on a user-pays basis. They include optional excursions and camps, optional sporting or music programs, and materials that don't relate to the Curriculum such as school magazines.

### **Purchase of educational items for students to own**

School councils may also invite parents to supply or purchase educational items to use and to own. If a parent does not provide or purchase their own educational items, the school must ensure the student has free access to what is needed at school to access the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

## **Financial help for families**

Schools have a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents who may be experiencing either short-term or long-term financial hardship.

Schools must:

- ensure costs to parents are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families
- consider the Financial Help for Families Policy and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments for their child
- nominate a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with parent payment arrangements.

Refer to Financial Help for Families for further information.

## **Applying the policy to specific examples**

### **Administrative software and communication tools**

Schools may ask parents to make a voluntary contribution (other contribution) towards the costs associated with third-party software and communication tools.

Schools cannot request a contribution for Department provided administrative software – for example, CASES21.

### **Classroom equipment and materials**

Schools may request a curriculum contribution towards the cost of purchasing, maintaining or replacing classroom equipment and materials (including class sets of items, sports equipment and any materials used by the teacher to teach).

Schools cannot deny students access to classroom equipment and materials if parents choose not to make a curriculum contribution.

## **Classroom subject consumables**

Many subject areas require the use of consumables for students to receive instruction in the Curriculum, including but not limited to Science (for example, chemicals), Art (for example, paint, coloured paper) and Technology (for example, wood, food ingredients).

Schools may ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards these items.

Schools may ask parents to pay for some consumables on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Item if the consumable is above and beyond what the school already provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum (for example, students wanting to use mahogany wood and silver for technology in lieu of the school's standard materials of timber and metal). Extra-Curricular Items should be clearly specified and itemised.

A student's participation in a subject, including an 'elective', cannot be made conditional on payment of user-pays consumables within that subject and the school will need to ensure that a standard consumable or learning experience is made available for free.

## **Digital and online subscriptions**

Schools may request a curriculum contribution towards digital and online subscriptions used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Where digital and online subscriptions enhance the learning experience of students but are not used for their standard classroom learning, schools may invite parents to purchase access to the subscriptions on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Item.

## **Digital devices**

Schools must ensure that students have free access to digital devices as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. The extent and frequency of access that students require depends on the school's digital learning program (for example, one-to-one or shared between students).

Schools may invite parents to purchase or bring their own digital devices from home instead of using what is made available for free by the school.

When inviting parents to purchase or lease a device through a third-party provider, the school may also invite parents to purchase relevant peripherals (for example, headphones, case), bundled apps or software and device insurance. Schools may also recommend minimum technical standards or specify a preferred device.

If a parent is unable to purchase a device or provide their own, then schools must ensure that equitable access to a device is provided.

Schools may request a voluntary contribution (curriculum contribution) towards the school's IT facilities and equipment including class sets of digital devices or one-to-one devices that the school owns.

Refer to the Digital Learning in Schools Policy for further information.

## **Excursions**

Schools may ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the costs associated with compulsory excursions related to the Curriculum. Schools cannot disadvantage a student in any way, including via the restriction of attendance or participation in such excursions, if their parents do not contribute.

Schools may ask parents to pay for optional excursions that are above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum and are offered as an Extra-Curricular Activity. These are provided on a user-pays basis and can enhance the learning experience of students. Schools must clearly communicate to parents that these are optional. Schools must not refuse instruction in the Curriculum to a student if parents do not purchase an optional excursion.

Schools may ask parents to pay for all costs of an optional camp or excursion, including the cost of transport, food, entry fees and accommodation for their child and any teacher(s) attending. Schools can also ask parents to pay for the cost of a casual relief teacher who is engaged for the purpose of supporting the optional camp or excursion. However, schools cannot ask parents to pay for the salaries of Department teaching staff attending the excursion.

Schools should keep the cost of optional excursions to a minimum and ensure they are affordable for most parents. Schools should also ensure families experiencing financial hardship access the relevant financial supports so their child can attend.

The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) assists with the costs of camps, sporting activities and excursions and is available for eligible families. Schools must communicate to families the availability of the CSEF.

Refer to the Financial Help for Families Policy for further information.

## **Generic fees or levies**

Schools cannot ask parents to pay generic fees or levies under Curriculum Contributions, for example, Art fee, Year 8 fee, English levy. It must be clear that parents are making a voluntary financial contribution towards the cost of these subjects and not paying a compulsory fee.

## **Homework**

If schools set homework, schools must ensure students have free access to the items required to complete the homework.

Schools must decide how students have free access to items to complete homework in a way that suits the context of the school. This can include but is not limited to:

- running an afterschool homework club where students have free access to items (if this is a viable option for the school based on its context)
- providing students with one-to-one access to items to take home and return to the school once the homework is completed
- sharing access to items between students by making them available to take home on scheduled days.

If schools make items available for students to take home, schools should communicate to parents that they are responsible for returning all items to the school in the same condition they were provided, subject to standard wear and tear. Refer to Seeking payment for damages to school property above for more information.

## **Safety equipment**

Schools must ensure students have free access to any required safety equipment, when needed.

Schools may request a contribution (other contribution) towards the cost of purchasing, maintaining or replacing safety equipment.

Schools may also invite parents to purchase or supply their own safety equipment instead of using what is made available by the school.

Schools are not obliged to provide safety equipment that is considered part of a student's uniform/clothing or is specifically fitted to them (for example, safety boots, closed shoes).

## **Stationery**

Schools may invite parents to purchase or provide their own stationery so their student does not need to use what is provided for free by the school.

If a parent chooses not to purchase or provide their own stationery, the school must ensure students have free access to any relevant stationery required for learning in the classroom.

Schools may also ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the costs associated with providing class sets of required stationery to students.

## **Subject enrolment fees and elective subject fees**

Schools may ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the cost of the school's subject offering. Enrolment in subjects that are part of the Curriculum cannot be made conditional on payment of subject fees including subjects defined by the school as 'elective'. Schools must ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are required by the school to deliver the Curriculum. Curriculum refers to the Victorian Curriculum F–10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

Schools may request parents pay for some consumables or activities associated with a subject on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Item or Activity. The Extra-Curricular Item or Activity must be above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum (for example, payment for attendance at an optional subject-related excursion, or purchase of non-standard classroom materials).

## **Swimming**

As with all aspects of the Curriculum, schools are expected to provide programs that meet the Curriculum within budget provisions. As a result, schools should ensure their free swimming and water safety programs align with curriculum requirements.

Schools may ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the cost of the school's swimming program.

Schools may ask parents to pay for swimming lessons or activities that are additional to curriculum requirements on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Activity. Schools must clearly communicate to parents that these are optional.

Refer to Swimming in Schools for further information.

## **Textbooks (including digital textbooks) and calculators**

Schools may invite parents to purchase or provide their own textbooks and calculators, so their student does not need to use what is provided for free by the school.

If a parent chooses not to purchase or provide their own textbooks or calculators, the school must ensure students have free access to any relevant texts or calculators required for learning in the classroom. Schools are not required to provide students with one-to-one access. To ensure adequate resourcing, schools may provide free access to textbooks and calculators using class sets, have them available to borrow from the library or establish a loan or sharing program. Schools can also provide photocopied pages of relevant texts (subject to copyright).

Schools may also ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the costs associated with providing class sets of required textbooks and calculators.

## **Uniforms**

Schools may request payments for school uniforms. Uniforms are governed by the Student Dress Code Policy.

Refer to the Student Dress Code Policy for further information.

## **Vocational education and training**

Schools cannot ask parents to pay for vocational education and training (VET) courses undertaken as part of VCAL, VCE, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships or Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships.

Schools can seek reimbursement from the Department for the cost of VET materials in line with the policy. Schools can find more information on reimbursements for VET materials at the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Delivered to Secondary Students page on the Policy and Advisory Library.

Parents will still be able to purchase fitted safety equipment or materials (for example, tools) for the student to own, rather than to use what is freely provided as part of the course. Parents may choose to purchase additional items or items beyond those required by the school. For example, parents may choose to purchase a more expensive brand or additional item intended to be kept by the student.

Optional Extra-Curricular Items and Activities offered as part of a VET course can still be provided on a user-pays basis.

Schools can also seek a general voluntary financial contribution (Curriculum Contribution or Other Contribution) from parents to support the school's provision of VET. This cannot be tied to any individual student's participation in a VET course and no student will be disadvantaged if their parent chooses not to contribute.

Please note, that information provided in the Parent Payment Policy should be read in conjunction with the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Delivered to Secondary Students Policy.