

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Riddells Creek Primary School

### 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.

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:

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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.

## 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 the three 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, formal, 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 in stead 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

9<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## **Book Packs 2021**

Dear Parents and Carers,

Riddells Creek Primary School is looking forward to another great year of teaching and learning and would like to advise you of our parent payment arrangements for 2021.

Provided below is our fee summary and then breakdown of fees for the coming year. We make every effort to keep the cost of items and activities to a minimum and affordable for all parents.

In summary, families attending Riddells Creek Primary can expect to pay:

Book Pack	\$165
Excursions throughout the year	\$135 (not required as a lump sum)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300 (over the course of the year)</b>

Voluntary Contribution (per family) – \$100.00

For a breakdown of the charges, please refer to the attached Fee Schedule

### **Payment Methods**

**AVAILABLE FROM 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021 VIA COMPASS**

### **Refunds**

Refunds are available for certain items and expenditure in some circumstances. Contact the Cathy Calder or the school office regarding refunds.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS**

- Second-hand and low-cost options: school lost property/ unidentified clothing
- Camps Sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF) provides payment 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. Refer to [www.education.vic.gov.au/csef](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/csef) for more information.
- State Schools Relief
- Private arrangements with school principal in times of hardship

### **CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP**

- Should you be experiencing financial hardship please speak to the Principal to discuss possible support options and flexible payment arrangements. Any information about your financial circumstances will be kept strictly confidential. No child is to miss out.

For a confidential discussion about accessing these services, or if you would like to discuss alternative payment arrangements, contact: Cathy Calder Ph: 03 5428 7277 | Email: [riddells.creek.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:riddells.creek.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

Yours sincerely,



Emma Brooksby  
Principal

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### **FEE SCHEDULE**

Please find the itemised list of Essential Student Learning Items and Optional Items for your child. Riddells Creek Primary School also continues to welcome your voluntary contributions for 2021.

### **Essential Student Learning Items**

Below is a list of items and activities which are essential for your child to learn the standard curriculum. You may choose to purchase these items through the school or provide your own. Please indicate which items you would like to purchase through the school on the table below:

Book packs will be distributed to students on the first day of school by their class teacher

**Section A Parent Payment \$165 materials and requisites package is as follows:**

Item	Specifications	Cost
Book Pack	Note: Parents may choose to provide or purchase the stationary pack themselves. If you choose to do this, you must consult with the school so that your child has the appropriate items.	\$35
Subject areas:	Items that the student takes temporary or permanent possession of	
Science		\$10
Humanities	Civics and Citizenship; Economics and Business; Geography and History	\$10
Music		\$10
Technologies (ICT)	Digital Technologies; Design and Technologies; Digital Support	\$30
Visual Art		\$20
Physical Education (PE)		\$10
Languages (Auslan)		\$10
Mathematics		\$10
English	(includes library)	\$20
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$165</b>

**Optional Items**

Riddells Creek Primary School offers a range of optional items and activities that are additional to the delivery of the standard curriculum. These items and activities are designed to broaden the school experience for your child. If you would like for your child to attend these activities, the notes will be sent home throughout the year for permission and payment. These charges are a guide only.

Optional Item	Amount over the Year
Optional excursions as scheduled throughout 2021. The cost of these excursions will be advised throughout the year.	No more than \$60
This is a minor camp year – a long day excursion occurs for each unit	\$75.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 135.00</b>

**Voluntary Contributions**

Riddells Creek Primary School continues to welcome your voluntary contributions to support our school.

You can make a general voluntary contribution that goes towards all of our school's important priorities for 2021 as well as providing additional activities and services for all students.

Alternatively, you can make a voluntary contribution to any of the specific priorities outlined in the table below:

Voluntary Contribution	Tax deductible?	Suggested Voluntary Contribution (or part thereof) <b>per family</b>
General Contribution	No	100.00
Shading over playgrounds	No	100.00

Your child will not be disadvantaged if you do not make a voluntary contribution. All records of voluntary contributions are kept confidential as well as your decision about whether to make a contribution or not.

**Ratified at school council on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020**