

Orbost Secondary College Parents Payments Policy

Context

The Education & Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program, and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, Administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program.

The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and senior secondary certificates (VCE and VCAL, including VET programs).

The Principal and School Council are responsible for developing a school-level policy which covers 3 payment categories:-

Essential Education Items

Essential items are those items used in the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. These items include :-

- Materials that the student takes possession of such as text books and student stationery.
- Materials for learning and teaching where the student takes possession of the finalised article such as cooking, ceramics, woodwork, textiles, printing.
- School uniform.
- Essential services associated with, but not considered to be part of, instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

Optional Extras

Optional items are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional items are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items include:-

- Instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program such as printing or internet for personal or recreational use.
- Extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program such as music tuition, extra-curricular sports and events.
- School based performances, productions and events.
- Materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable such as the use of more expensive materials.
- Materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum such as the school magazine.
- School facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the Student Resource Package such as student accident insurance, hire of musical instruments.

Voluntary Financial Contributions

School Council may invite parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school to make a donation in the form of a voluntary financial contribution to the school. These may include :-

- Contribution towards a building or ground improvement trust fund (these trust funds are approved by the Australian Tax Office and are tax deductible).

- Contributions for a specific purpose within the school in addition to those funded through the Student Resource Package such as new equipment, computers, furniture.
- General donations to the school.

This Policy must meet the community's expectations and will be available to parents and guardians upon request. The school's Policy is to keep parent payments to a minimum.

Implementation and Administration

The principal is responsible for the implementation and administration of this Policy. This includes:-

- Ensuring this Policy is communicated within the school and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.
- Ensuring parents are provided with a reasonable period of notice of payment of Essential, optional or voluntary financial contributions.
- Ensuring, where possible, that payment arrangements coincide with the availability of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) support and that parents are not pressured in to signing over their portion of the EMA.
- Not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as condition of payment of essential, optional or voluntary items.
- Ensure that the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents and guardians are kept strictly confidential.

Communication with Parents

The school must ensure that all communication with parents about education items, including requests for payment, is fair and reasonable. Payment requests, letters or CASES 21 invoices for student materials and service charges must be accompanied by the following information:-

- Parents/Guardians are required to provide essential education items for their students and that they have the option of purchasing these items from the school or through a supplier of their choice, where appropriate.
- The availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the Principal if the parent wishes to discuss these.
- Details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the School. A detailed explanation of all school charges is included on the reverse of the "College Charges Advice". This form is handed out with the booklist and is available from the Office of the College upon request.
- That a copy of the School Payment Policy is available upon request.

Payment requests or letters to parents must clearly identify which payment category the items fall into. Schools may issue only on request for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder in a school year. It is not acceptable to harass or coerce a parent or guardian to obtain payment.

Support Options

Parents who have difficulty paying for essential items can access a range of support options including :-

- The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This is a Victorian Government allowance paid to low income families to supplement to cost of putting a child through school. This allowance cuts out upon the child's 16th birthday.
- Centre Pay can be organised through Centrelink for payments to be received at school on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.
- The School Start Bonus (SSB). Paid to the parents or guardians of every Prep or Year 7 student to assist in meeting the start up costs of sending their child to school.
- State School Relief Committee (SSR). Principals can apply to SSR on behalf of parents to assist with the purchase of uniforms.
- Community Welfare organisations such as St Vincent De Paul, Salvation Army etc.
- Welfare grants allocated to the school from time to time.

Where families have difficulty making payments the Principal is required to discuss the range of support options available, and to negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement such as payment by instalments. The principal is to explore ways to make quality second hand books and uniforms available to needy parents.

Parents and guardians who experience difficulty making payments to the school for essential education items should be encouraged to discuss alternative payment methods as a regular instalment with the Principal delegated senior staff member.

Payment and Non-payment

It is the Policy of this school that:-

- All students have access to the standard curriculum program.
- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
- Parents are provided with an alternative option if their child does not participate in an excursion or camp.
- Invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month.
- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type be used by schools to obtain any funds from parents or guardians.
- Principals are responsible for ensuring that payment details for all parent or guardians are kept strictly confidential.
- Only one initial and one reminder notice of voluntary contributions may be sent to parents or guardians in any given school year.

The College is aware of the significant cost of textbooks and where possible prefers to provide class sets to reduce the overall cost of the booklist to parents/guardians. Updating, replacement of an introduction of new textbooks is covered from the year level curriculum charges.