



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

PURPOSE

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.

The Education & Training Reform Act 2006 empowers school councils to charge parents for goods and services used in the course of instruction of their children, as well as to raise funds. As the quality and variety of educational programs offered by our school are enhanced, School Council requests payment from parents for certain student materials and services charges, basically payment of Essential Curriculum items.

The purpose of the Broadmeadows Valley Primary School (BVPS) Parent Payment Policy sets out to communicate to the school community the practices that will be used to ensure that payment practices are consistent and transparent. This policy will enable all students to participate in and access all the learning opportunities offered at BVPS.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all parents and guardians of children enrolled at Broadmeadows Valley Primary School. 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 parents¹ under three categories only- Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Financial Contributions.

DEFINITIONS

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.

¹ 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.

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.

Parent: The definition of parent is as quoted 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.

POLICY

Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when schools determine their parent payments practices. Broadmeadows Valley Primary School will be guided by the following principles when making decisions regarding parent payments:

- **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.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

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:

- Broadmeadows Valley Primary School 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
- 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 (e.g., school camps, excursions, special in school events)
- 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

At times, 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 liaison person at the school with whom they can confidentially discuss payment arrangements.

Engaging and Communicating with Parents

In respect to parent payments, school council 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. The following includes essential information for parents:

- Victorian government schools must provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the curriculum requirements in the 8 key learning areas as outlined in the Victorian Curriculum F–10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (the Curriculum).
- BVPS Council may request parents make voluntary financial contributions towards the cost of schooling under 2 categories: Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions.
- BVPS may invite parents to purchase "Extra-Curricular Items and Activities" – this would generally include items, activities and services that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside of the school's delivery of the Curriculum (including alternative forms of instruction). These are provided on a user-pays basis.

- BVPS may invite parents to supply or purchase their own educational items to use and to own. If a student 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 ensure full participation in the school's curriculum delivery.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

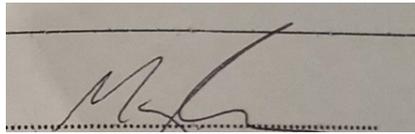
The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department's **School Policy and Advisory Guide**.

Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see:

Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents

EVALUATION AND RATIFICATION

The BVPS Parent Payment Policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or before in line with DET changing requirements or mandates. Amendments to this policy will be made in consultation with the school community. Broadmeadows Valley Primary School will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and revise the policy at least once every three years.

POLICY	SCHOOL PURCHASING CARD POLICY
BVPS Council President	Signed: 
BVPS Principal	Signed: <i>C. Ziano</i>
Reviewed	August 2021
Ratified	09/ 11 /2021