



SASSAFRAS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parent Payment Policy

RATIONALE

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.

The quality and variety of educational programs offered by our school are enhanced if Departmental funds are supplemented by Educational Charges (for essential items and optional extras) and Voluntary Contributions.

GUIDELINES

- 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 of which students take possession. 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. These include enrichment programs including swimming programs, camps, excursions, in school visits and after school programs such as robotics clubs.
- Voluntary Financial Contribution: Parents can be invited to make a donation to the school for a general or specific purpose, e.g. school grounds projects, library, buildings or for new equipment.
- 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

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.

- 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

School Council will make clear distinctions between educational charges for materials and services for which parents can be expected to pay and voluntary contributions, so that parents are not confused regarding the voluntary nature of the contributions.

IMPLEMENTATION

Cost and support to parents

When determining the annual budget for parent payments School Council will ensure that the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

We will 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 some 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.
- clear specification of the Items, description and costs within the three payment categories will be provided
- 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. Sensitivity will be shown to the differing circumstances of individual students and families with alternative payment options being available for those who do not have an immediate capacity to contribute.

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. We have hardship arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty. In addition to alternative payment options, hardship arrangements include seeking financial donations from not for profit organisations such as Rotary, sponsorship of uniforms by our uniform supplier and the use of school bank interest funds

allocated to support parents financially. State Schools Relief is also available to assist with provision of school uniform.

Our Sassafras Parent Group manages a second hand uniform shop to provide good quality uniform items to parents at a low cost.

CSEF funding is used for identified families who qualify for this support

All parents are provided the name and contact details of a contact person at the school with whom they can discuss payment arrangements.

Engaging with parents

In respect to the school's development of its parent payments, the Principal and School Council will engage in effective communication with the school community via the school newsletter and letter sent home to families each year with the parent payment schedule and information. Parents will also be informed, via the newsletter, of the opportunity to raise any issues and make general inquiries about charges with the school Principal.

This policy will be available to the community on our school website.

REVIEW OF POLICY

The school will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of all aspects of this policy as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community.

**This policy was last ratified by School Council
in**

20 November 2018