



ARMADALE PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

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 parents¹ under three categories only: (1) Essential Student Learning Items; (2) Optional Items; and (3) 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. Armadale Primary School pre-purchase in bulk on behalf of the parents essential items for the classroom and these are included in your Essential Items bill at the start of each year. Armadale Primary has spent considerable time selecting the most appropriate requisites to meet the needs of our children as set out below:

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.

1. Individual classroom: materials which your child will receive as his/her personal property for use during the year, charged at cost – this includes paper both for worksheets and exercise books, pens, pencils, texters, etc. Parents are not required to individually supply children's stationery items. All supplies will be purchased by the School at bulk order prices (GST free) and will be supplied to children as needed throughout the year.

2. Group Classroom: materials and items of equipment which your child will have access to in the classroom during the year on a shared basis. Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. cooking, ceramics, photography).

3. Specialist classes: supply of materials, the purchase and maintenance of equipment and aids. In order to maintain high quality teaching programs, upgrading of resources is constant.

4. Technology: use and maintenance of computers, internet and computer software.

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 items include:

1. Transport and entrance for camps and excursions/incursions which all students are expected to attend;

2. Extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, Chess Club, Cooking Club, Out of School Hours Care (OOSHC);

3. Class photographs; and

4. School magazines such as Armadale Primary Yearly Magazine - Armadillo.

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.

Below are the specific areas for voluntary contributions at Armadale Primary School:

School Council Voluntary Contribution (Equipment and Grounds)

This amount assists School Council to provide additional items of equipment and maintain the buildings and grounds in a safe and healthy state for your children. The amount requested will be reviewed by School Council annually.

Armadale Primary School Building Fund

The School Building Fund is a vehicle in which funds can be raised to support the on-going improvement of the school's buildings. As an eligible fund, all donations are tax deductible, and an official School Building Fund receipt will be issued.

Armadale Primary School Library

Established in September 2018 following parent feedback, the School Library DRG raises funds to preserve and maintain the collection of books and other materials for reading housed in the School library and general maintenance of the library. As an eligible fund, all donations are tax deductible, and an official School Library Account receipt will be issued.

Both of these funds are registered as being eligible as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) s under Armadale Primary School's ABN 12 741 703 282.

Parents & Friends Association (PFA)

The opportunity is open to all families to support the PFA with the various activities that this group runs at the School for students and their families.

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:

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 that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed;
- payment requests are broadly itemised within the appropriate category;
- 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), as 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 (this refers to school excursions and incursions, events and school camps);
- 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; and

- 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 and these can be accessed through [“Cost support for families.”](#)

Consideration for 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 with the name and contact details of a nominated parent payment contact person at the School who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist parents including the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF), State Schools Relief Committee and Human Services. (<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/financial-support/concessions/hardship>)

Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF)

A parent or guardian of a child under 16 years of age who holds an eligible Centrelink benefit and a Health Care Card or pension card, may apply for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) through the School. These funds are directed to the School and must be used for camps, sports and excursions. The amount is determined by the Commonwealth.

State Schools Relief Committee support (SSR)

SSR provides practical assistance via the School, through supplying quality school clothing, generic uniforms, footwear, socks and underwear free of charge or by authorisation to purchase from their school shop or supplier on a co-payment basis. To apply, please contact the Principal.

The SSR operational costs are paid by the Victorian Government and the only criteria is that the child must be enrolled in a Victorian Government school. We understand that every circumstance is different. There are a variety of situations where the child may need support such as poverty, neglect, homelessness, financial hardship, family violence, illness and the devastating effects of house fires and natural disasters.

State Schools' Relief is a registered charity with endorsement for charity concessions and has DGR Status, meaning all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

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. Armadale Primary School have written hardship arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty. Contact can be made to the Principal as a starting point, who refers it to the Business Manager for action using the Hardship Policy.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

Armadale Primary School currently use Primary School Wear (PSW) for their school uniform requirements. Second-hand uniforms are available from the School for a gold coin donation. Office staff can advise parents of the location.

Through The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) (see above), the Government provides payments for eligible students to attend activities like:

- school camps or trips;
- swimming and school-organised sport programs;
- outdoor education programs; and
- excursions and incursions.

Applications for these can be made at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/csef.aspx#link16>

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.



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:



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 these categories based on the learning and teaching program of their school.

Items the student purchases or hires

- e.g.
- school magazines, class photos
 - functions, formals, 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 instead 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

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

ARMADALE PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Payment arrangements

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks' notice, i.e. prior to the end of the previous school year) for the following year. Payments will be requested but at the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

Payment requests or letters to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.

Alternative payment options are available through the School with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the School principal to discuss their individual circumstances.

With regard to the voluntary Building and Library Funds, receipts will be issued for tax-deductible donations.

Invoices/statements for **unpaid** essential education items will be issued according to the School's flow chart:

- Parents will be advised in the newsletter that essential education items charges will be payable via the Compass portal by the end of Term 1
- The Business Manager will issue first reminder **letter** (including Voluntary Contribution letter) to parents at the end of Term 1
- Reminders will be posted via the **newsletter** by the Principal and SC Treasurer in April, May and June
- The Business Manager will send CASES21 statements to parents in June
- The Principal will ring parents from July

As per the current Armadale Primary School Excursion Policy, Armadale Primary School will provide communication to each family through Compass events for both permissions and payments that itemises all excursions/incursions for the current term. Consent and payment must be received before a child will be given permission from Armadale Primary School to attend. In some instances, excursions may be ad-hoc, if we are offered opportunities, which we do not want the children to miss. Armadale Primary School will make provisions for students whose families are experiencing financial hardships not to be excluded as identified in the hardship policy. Armadale Primary School will advise of individual additional excursions or incursions where a further payment to cover these costs may be required.

All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

If any parent would like to raise any issues, make general inquiries about charges and the contact details where complaints can be referred to at Armadale Primary School, their first point of contact is with the School Principal or in her absence the Business Manager.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Armadale Primary School Council will monitor the implementation of this policy, identify the factors/measures to be taken into account, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents, how/when it will be reported back to the School community, and timing and processes of review.

Date of approval by School Council

28th October 2019