

***Weeroona College Bendigo is a child safe school and has zero tolerance to child abuse.***

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's Parent Payment Policy and Implementation.

### **Aims**

- To ensure that the College's parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.
- To ensure that payment requests are kept to a minimum, accurately costed and represent value for money to parents.
- To ensure that no child will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction in the standard curriculum for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

### **Parent Payment Charges**

The contributions that parents make to their child's education, in all forms, have an important role in enriching the College's learning and teaching program and improving educational outcomes. The commitment from parents to contribute benefits students and results in improved achievement outcomes, wellbeing and engagement in learning.

The College may request payment from parents for items falling into the below categories:

#### **Essential Student Learning Items**

These are the items, activities or services that the College deems essential to student learning of the standard curriculum. Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the College or provide their own in consultation with the College. Where a student cannot participate in an essential activity or provide an essential student learning item, the College will consider the financial hardship circumstances of the student or make alternative arrangements that provides for the required knowledge and skills to be learned.

These items include

- Textbooks that are hired from the College each year.
- Stationery, workbooks and activity books. Parents are able to purchase these items through the College's booklist supplier.
- Individual portable computers.
- Student ID cards and locks
- Materials that students will consume during their classes such as cooking ingredients for home economics, materials used in practical science classes.
- Materials for final products that students take home such as woodwork and technology projects, photography paper, fabric and haberdashery for textiles.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy will be reviewed by the School Council in 2017

- Activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend such as excursions, incursions and school sports.

A list of College Council approved charges will be provided as an appendix to this policy.

### **Optional Items**

These are the items, activities or services that are optional and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. If a student accesses an optional item, parents are required to pay for them.

These items include

- Items the student purchases or hires including the college magazine, year 10 rugby jumpers
- Activities the student purchases including instrumental music tuition (BIMP), debutante ball, year 10 valedictory dinner, year 10 celebration day, camps, excursions, incursions and sports where attendance is optional and not expected of all students.

A list of College Council approved charges will be provided as an appendix to this policy.

### **Voluntary Financial Contributions**

The College may invite voluntary financial contributions to the Weeroona College Bendigo Library or Building Fund. Donations to either of these funds are tax deductible. The initial invitation will be included on the College's booklist each year and one further invitation may be issued at the Principal's and Business Manager's discretion during the year. Voluntary financial contributions will not be included on a family's statement of outstanding charges. Students will not be disadvantaged in any way if their parent/guardian declines the invitation to make a voluntary financial contribution.

### **Payment arrangements and methods**

Parents will be provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees at least 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year. Notification will be given via the College booklist that will be distributed in early November each year. Parents may choose to pay annual school fees to the booklist supplier on book collection day in January, or directly to the College's General Office by way of cash, cheque, EFTPOS or bPay at the beginning of the school year. The College may send reminder notices of outstanding charges to parents at least once per term, but not exceeding once per month.

Families experiencing financial hardship should refer to the family support options and consideration of hardship sections below.

The status and details of any financial arrangements will be kept confidential and only shared with relevant College personnel.

### **Family support options**

The College understands that the differing financial, cultural and social circumstances of individual students and their families may lead to financial hardship. A range of support options are available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential student learning items. These options include but are not limited to:

- Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF).
- State Schools Relief for assistance with uniforms, shoes and stationery.
- Flexible payment plans including paying for school fees in instalments throughout the year and the use of Centrepay for payments directly from Centrelink benefits.
- Individual portable computers that are loaned or provided at low cost by the College.
- Discounted fees in certain circumstances.
- Waived fees in certain circumstances.
- Buy Early & Save discounts offered by the College's uniform supplier, Dobsons, in October.
- Secondhand uniforms- *Bendigo School Books & Uniforms Buy, Sell, Swap* Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/474854015962238/>

Families experiencing financial hardship are also encouraged to consider community assistance programs such as:

- Saver Plus is an initiative of Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ, delivered locally by community organisations in 22 locations in Victoria. Saver Plus assists individuals and families on lower incomes to have every dollar up to \$500 saved over a 10-month period matched by ANZ to go towards education-related costs.
- A Start in Life is an Australian charity based in NSW that provides assistance to disadvantaged students from kindergarten through to tertiary studies.
- Good Shepherd Microfinance provides affordable financial programs for people on low or limited incomes that may assist families to afford educational costs and other expenses. The No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) provides access to fair and safe credit (up to \$1,200) for the purchase of essential goods and services delivered through a network of local community organisations.

### **Consideration of hardship**

Parents experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to contact the College's Business Manager (nominated parent payment contact person) to confidentially discuss their available options.

Phone: 03 5443 2133

The College's Business Manager can be contacted during business hours to discuss parent payment questions or concerns.

Parents may make an appointment during November and December to discuss parent payment arrangements for the following school year. During the appointment, parents will be asked to briefly describe their financial circumstances and asked if they are the holder of a valid means tested concession card. Parents will not be asked to provide further information such as bank account balances. Parents can expect to be treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement.

Available options will be discussed and negotiated with parents to find a solution that is affordable. Parents may be asked to complete forms such a payment plan arrangement form or Centrepay form.

Parents may be accompanied to the appointment by a support person or community advocate if they choose to do so.

Financial information provided by parents during the appointment will remain confidential and the outcome of any appointment will only be shared with relevant personnel.

Circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis to reflect the varying needs of families across the College.

### **Refunds to parents**

This policy aims to ensure that parents receive value for money for any amounts paid to the College. To this end, refunds may be required from time to time to ensure that parents do not pay for an item or service that their child has not received. Parents should refer to each of the categories below for further information.

All refunds are subject to the prior approval of the Business Manager or Principal. Refunds will be processed by way of cheque or direct deposit in line with the Department's financial guidelines.

### **Essential Student Learning Items**

Essential student learning items such as camps, excursions and subject charges may be refunded at the request of parents in circumstances such as where a student was unable to attend an essential camp, excursion or activity, or when a student has changed elective subjects. Students who exit the College during the year may be refunded for annual College charges on a pro rata basis eg. A student exiting the College at the end of term 2 would be

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<sup>4</sup> This policy will be reviewed by the School Council in 2017

entitled to a 50% refund of some charges. Items that the student has taken full possession of such as the College diary will not be refunded.

### **Optional Items**

Parents are required to pay for any optional item or activity on a user-pay basis. In instances where the College has incurred the cost of the optional item or activity, no refund will be provided.

If a request for refund is received prior to the College incurring the cost of the optional item or activity, a refund may be given.

### **Voluntary Financial Contributions**

Voluntary donations to either the College's Library or Building Fund are non-refundable except in extenuating circumstances that have been approved by the College's Business Manager or Principal.

### **Communication with families**

This policy and payment information will be distributed to parents with the booklist in early November each year. This information will also be sent to parents electronically via Compass and uploaded to the College's website. Parent payment reminder letters that are posted each term will be accompanied with the details of payment and support options, and also a link to this policy.

Parents are encouraged to raise any issues, make general inquiries about charges, and refer complaints to the Business Manager in the first instance. If unresolved, complaints can be referred to the Principal.

### **Monitoring and review of the implementation of the policy**

College Council has a key role in ensuring the College's approach to parent payments reflects the shared expectations of the whole school community and is therefore responsible for monitoring effectiveness and impact on parents and students.

This policy will be reviewed annually by College Council

### **References**

Further parent payment information and resources provided by DET can be accessed at

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<sup>5</sup> This policy will be reviewed by the School Council in 2017

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx>

This policy was last ratified by School Council in	September 2017	
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## 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.

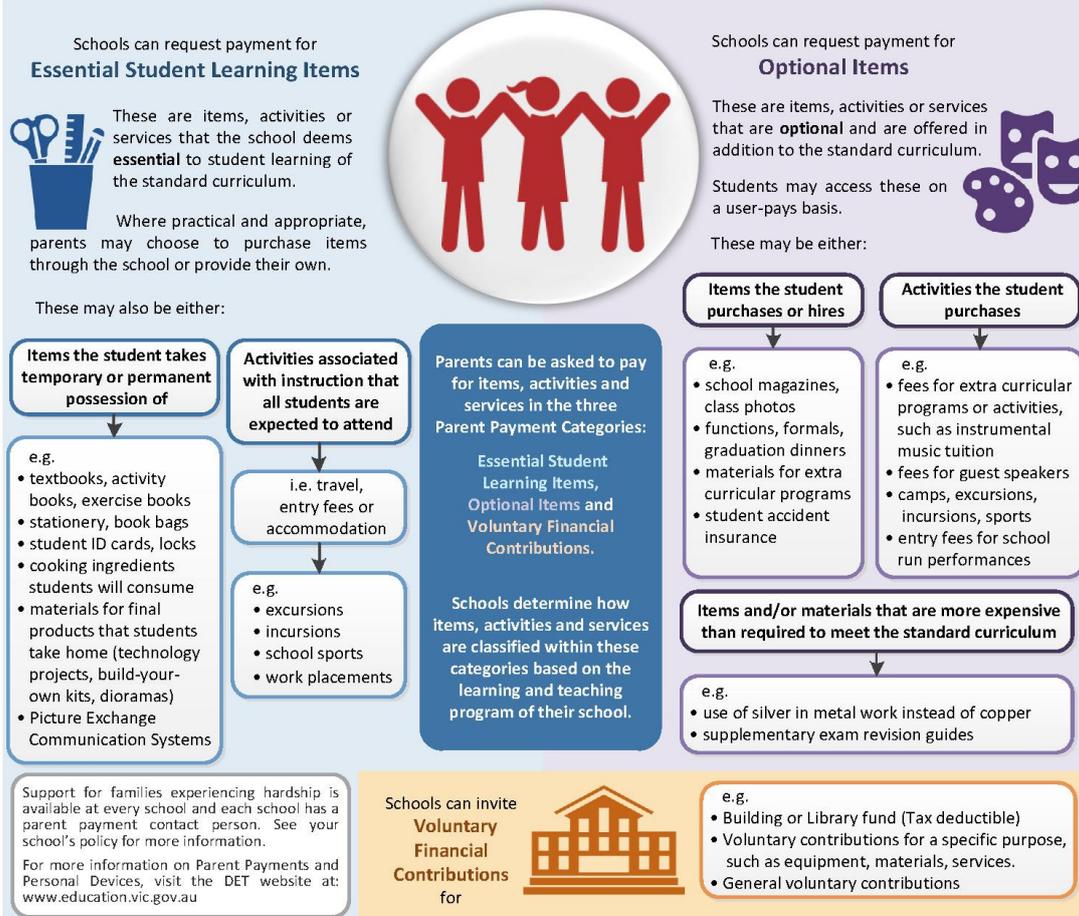
The standard curriculum for senior secondary schools means a program that enables a student to be awarded a VCE or VCAL qualification.

#### 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?



# DET PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

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## *Weeroona College Bendigo*

### **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.

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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.

## 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:

### 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](#)



## Weeroona College Bendigo

### Parent Payment Policy

#### Appendix of 2018 College Fees

*Approved by School Council September 2017*

SUBJECT/AREA	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORY (Essential / Optional / Voluntary)	AMOUNT
<b>YEAR 7</b>			
Food Technology	Student cooking ingredients and consumables	Essential	\$40.00
STEM (Science)	Student Consumables- 3D Printing	Essential	\$5.00
Textiles	Student consumables including haberdashery and basic fabric.	Essential	\$25.00
BIMP	Bendigo Instrumental Music Program Membership	Optional	\$300.00
<b>Year 8</b>			
Woodwork	Wood and associated materials used in woodworking projects.	Essential	\$40.00
Metals	Metal and associated materials used in student projects.	Essential	\$40.00
STEM	Student Consumables- 3D Printing	Essential	\$5.00
BIMP	Bendigo Instrumental Music Program Membership	Optional	\$300.00
<b>Year 9 &amp; 10</b>			
Art Ceramics	Student materials used in ceramic projects such as clay and glazing.	Essential	\$10.00
Art Drawing	Student consumables used in projects including drawing paper.	Essential	\$10.00
Art Elective	Student consumables used in art projects such as paint and paper/card.	Essential	\$10.00

Art Music & Dance	Choreographer sessions of instrument levy	Essential	\$20.00
Art Photography	Student consumables used in projects including photo paper.	Essential	\$10.00
Art Vis Com	Student consumables used in art projects such as paint and paper/card.	Essential	\$10.00
BIMP Year 10	Bendigo Instrumental Music Program Membership	Optional	\$180
BIMP Year 10	BIMP Instrument Hire	Optional	\$140
BIMP Year 7-9	Bendigo Instrumental Music Program Membership	Optional	\$300
Computer Aided Design	Consumables used in 3D printing	Essential	\$20
Design & Engineering	Student materials/consumables	Essential	\$25
Electronics	Student consumables for 3D printing and projects including doorbell project, electronic dice project and light project.	Essential	\$35
Fashion	Haberdashery/basic fabric for learning skills.	Essential	\$25
Foods (Yr 10)	Student cooking ingredients and consumables	Essential	\$70
Foods (Yr 9)	Student cooking ingredients and consumables	Essential	\$60
General Metals	Student materials/consumables	Essential	\$40
Machine Shop	Student materials/consumables	Essential	\$30
Outdoor Education	Student excursions including transport, activities, some food.	Essential	\$65
PE (Year 10)	Local excursions through the year (\$10 per term)	Essential	\$40
PE (Year 9)	Local excursions through the year (\$10 per term)	Essential	\$40
STEM	Student Consumables- 3D Printing	Essential	\$5
VET Automotive	Student materials/consumables	Essential	\$50
VET Engineering	Student materials/consumables	Essential	\$50
VET Hospitality	Student cooking ingredients, consumables and printed materials.	Essential	\$90
VET Sport & Rec	Student First Aid Course	Essential	\$55.00

1 This policy will be reviewed by the School Council in 2017

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Woodwork	Student materials/consumables	Essential	\$40
World of Foods	Student cooking ingredients and consumables.	Essential	\$70

<b>College Item</b>	<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Book Hire	All Students	Essential	\$50
College Magazine	All Students	Optional	\$15
Combination Lock	Year 7 / New Students	Optional	\$12
ID Card	All Students	Essential	\$2.50
Literacy Planet Software	Years 7-9	Essential	\$5.00
Maths Pathways Software	All Students	Essential	\$10.00
Print Credits	All Students	Optional	\$10
Student Diary	All Students	Essential	\$3.30