

## PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

### **RATIONALE:**

The *Education and 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.

The Department of Education Training provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) and various programs. This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the National Curriculum (AusVELS) and senior secondary certificates (VCE, VCAL and VET programs).

### **AIMS:**

Findon Primary School is committed to ensuring that:

- All students have access to the standard curriculum program
- The school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment
- Items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- Costs are kept to a minimum
- Payment requests must be clearly itemised within each category
- Parents and caregivers are given the option of purchasing equivalent essential education items themselves, in consultation with the school
- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions
- The status and details of any payments or non payments are confidential
- Parents are provided with early notice of payment requests such as booklist (e.g. a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year)
- Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
- It meets our families and community's expectation

### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

#### **Categories**

The three parent payment categories that school councils can request payments from parents are:

#### Essential education items

These are items which parents and caregivers pay the school to provide or may decide to provide themselves, if appropriate.

These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program and include:

- materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished article
- school uniform
- activities associated with, but not part of instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend

If parents and caregivers choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this should be done in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.

### Optional extras

These are items provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students. They are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and caregivers choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- Instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. netbook program, student computer printing for personal use)
- Extra curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music)
- School based performances, productions and events
- Materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials and services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (e.g. the use of more expensive materials)
- Materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school magazines)
- School facilities and equipment not associated with providing the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments)

### Voluntary financial contributions

Parents and caregivers, or anyone else, can be invited to make a donation to the school for the following purposes:

- Contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund (these trust funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)
- Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers or student related services
- General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

### **Communication with parents**

All payment requests, booklists, letters or CASES21 invoices for student materials and service charges will be accompanied by the following information:

- a description of each of the three parent payment categories
- details of what parents are being asked to pay for
- that parents are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier, where appropriate
- the availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the Principal if the parent wishes to discuss this
- 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
- only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice per year is sent to all parents and caregivers
- a copy of this policy is available through the school office and on the school website

### **Support Options**

There are a range of support options available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for essential items including:

- The Schoolkids Bonus which is provided by Centrelink to help with education costs and is automatically paid in January and July to eligible families and students
- Access to State Schools Relief Funds for support via the Principal to assist with clothing and uniforms
- Welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families
- Parents and caregivers who have access to a current Health Care Card are eligible to apply for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Level

**Additional Information**

- The Principal will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The Principal will make decisions about how to manage non payment of essential education items or optional extras on a case by case basis
- Parents and caregivers who experience difficulties providing or paying the school to provide essential education items, are encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal to discuss alternative payment methods
- Where families have difficulty making payments, the Principal will discuss with them the range of support options available, and will negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by instalments
- The Principal will also explore ways to make quality second hand books and uniforms available to parents in need
- All payments and non payments will be strictly confidential. The public identification of students or their parents where payments have or have not been received will not occur
- All costs and processes associated with parent payments and voluntary contributions will be reasonable, will be defensible in relation to Department of Education and Training requirements, and will be within the expectations of the school community

**EVALUATION:** This policy shall be reviewed as part of the ongoing policy and process review

**REFERENCE:**

Department of Education and Training - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>  
Education and Training Reform Act 2006  
Parent Payments Categories Flowchart  
Parent payment support materials for school use memo