



PARENT PAYMENTS (DET Overview) POLICY

Latest DET Update: 01/09/2020

First Developed: June 2017

**Updated: July & October 2018, November 2019 and
February, April 2020 & September 2020, November 2021**



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the APPS office for assistance.

POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the curriculum requirements in the eight key learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).
- School Councils can only request payments from parents/carers under three categories: Voluntary Curriculum Contributions, Other Contributions, Extra Curriculum Items and Activities
- Schools must consider the [Financial Help for Families Policy](#) and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments.
- Schools must have their parent payment arrangements approved by their School Council and uploaded onto their public websites.
- Schools cannot:
 - deny students access to the standard curriculum program, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments not being made for education items or activities
 - request payments from parents for school operating costs (for example, utility costs) or general and unspecified charges (for example, subject levies)
- Schools and School Councils must adhere to the Parent Payments Policy which is outlined as follows.

Free instruction

All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in the eight key learning areas:

- English
- Mathematics
- Sciences
- The Humanities
- The Arts
- Languages
- Health and Physical Education

Technologies

Free instruction includes 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.

Schools cannot deny students access to the standard curriculum program, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments not being made for education items or activities. Schools cannot withhold student access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payments being made.

PARENT PAYMENT CATEGORIES

School Councils can only request payments from parents under three categories:

1. Voluntary Curriculum Contributions

Voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the curriculum.

2. Other Contributions

Voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives

3. Extra-Curriculum Items and Activities

Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free to deliver the curriculum. These are provided on a user-pays basis.

Financial Support for Families

Antonio Park Primary School understands that some families may experience financial difficulty and offers a range of support options, including:

- The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund
- Individual Payment Plans

For a confidential discussion about accessing these services, or if you would like to discuss alternative payment arrangements, contact:

Leonie Oppawsky or Cheryl Curcio

Ph – (03) 9874 4371

Email: antonio.park.ps@education.vic.gov.au

Payment Methods

The preferred method of payment is through the Compass portal, however payment can also be made by credit card at the office.

PURPOSE

- This policy outlines the ways in which the Antonio Park Primary School Council can request voluntary contributions from parents/carers and ensures that parent payment practices in schools are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

DEFINITION

Standard curriculum

Standard curriculum is the Victorian Curriculum F-10, Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

IMPLEMENTATION

- The school will use the mandatory **'Parent Payment Policy and Implementation Template'** when developing the school's parent payment arrangements. This will ensure the school can customise the implementation of the policy to the local context whilst retaining all information in the policy template, thereby facilitating consistent implementation of key practices across schools.
- The school will ensure that students have free access to instruction that is offered by to fulfil the curriculum requirements in the eight key learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum.

Finance

Finance manual

School budgeting and reporting for parent/carer payments and contributions will follow the procedures outlined in the [Finance Manual — Financial Management for Schools](#) and [Parent Payments Policy](#). These include, but are not limited to:

School Councils must approve, in a timely manner, parent payment arrangements

- any payment must be accurately recorded in CASES21
- receipts must be issued immediately to parents upon payment
- records of payments and contributions must be kept confidential

School operating costs

The school will not request payments from parents/carers for school operating costs. This includes:

- teacher support or professional learning
- utilities such as electricity and internet
- school equipment (for example, sports equipment for physical education)
- administrative costs such as merchant fees associated with electronic payment transactions, sending text messages or letters to parents, administration software, photocopying and insurance or equipment maintenance

Refunds

Refunds will be worked out on a case by case basis at the local school level and the school will use discretion to provide refunds to families and will do so where it is reasonable and fair (for example, if the school has not incurred a cost).

If the school has incurred costs, we will act reasonably and take into consideration the *Financial Help for Families Policy* and relevant arrangements, including support for families experiencing hardship. For example, the school may consider refunding families for unavoidable event cancellations if a family experiences a crisis or sudden serious illness and the student can no longer attend the event.

If the school decides to provide a refund, then parents/carers need to agree and advise the school where the refund should be paid. If that agreement cannot be reached, the refund is usually paid into the account from which the money came. Where the payment was made in cash, the school will wait until the parents/carers reach an agreement and advise the school.

Voluntary Contributions to Building Fund and Library Fund

Voluntary Contributions to the school are only tax deductible if they are:

- donations are endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office and have a Deductible Gift Recipients status

Refer to the [Finance Manual for Schools](#) for further information on this.

Communications and school arrangements

Communications to parents

Communications to parents/carers will begin at least six weeks prior to the end of the previous school year to enable parents/carers to plan and budget accordingly.

When inviting parents/carers to purchase items and activities, communications will include:

- clear descriptions of each of the three parent payment categories and the items and activities to purchase
- a link to the Department's Parent Payments Policy
- the details of the nominated school parent payment contact
- the availability of financial help for families' arrangements

The school will use the [Parent Payment Arrangements Template](#) when developing communications to parents/carers.

All communications will use language that is easy to understand, is culturally appropriate and if required translated into multiple languages. Refer to [Interpreting and Translation Services](#) for further information.

Breaching the Parent Payments Policy

The Department conducts regular reviews of schools' parent payment arrangements to ensure schools adhere to the Parent Payments Policy. If a parent/carer is of the view that a school is incorrectly applying the Parent Payments Policy or they are being incorrectly charged for items or activities, they will be able to raise concerns with the Department to follow up with the school. If a school is found to be in breach of the Parent Payments Policy and incorrectly charging parents/carers for items or activities, the Department will work directly with and support the school to make the relevant changes and to re-communicate its parent payment arrangements to the school community. Where money has been incorrectly received from parents/carers, they may need to be credited or repaid.

Uploading parent payment arrangements onto the school's website

The school will upload the School Council approved parent payment arrangements onto the school's public website six weeks before the end of the school year.

Our parent payment arrangements will include all communications with parents/carers in relation to parent payments including booklists and school fee schedules for each year level if applicable

The school will use the [Parent Payment Arrangements Template](#) to complete their arrangements for each year level and upload the completed templates once they have been approved by School Council.

The school website will also include a link to the Department's Parent Payments Policy on the same page as the school's parent payment arrangements.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions where appropriate

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed at least annually (or if guidelines change) as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community (latest DET update early September 2020).

School Council Approval Required

This policy was ratified November 2021.

Related policies

Finance Manual — Financial Management for Schools August 2021

Financial Help for Families

Personal Devices — Access

School Council — Powers and Functions

Student Dress Code

Excursions (Including Camps)