

Parent Payment Policy

1. Objective

This policy covers payments for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions that schools may request, and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests may be made. This school-level policy ensures that parent payments are kept to a minimum and do not exceed the cost of the relevant materials or services to the student.

Ringwood North Primary School is supportive of our parent community and will not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment of essential education items, optional extras or voluntary financial contributions.

The status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents and guardians are confidential.

2. Guidelines

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* provides for 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.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS).

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) 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 which are an integral part of the SRP.

Ringwood North Primary School council have developed policies and plans to allocate their overall resources – human, financial and physical – in accordance with the goals, targets and strategies outlined in their strategic plan. This includes the allocation of funding provided under the SRP, any other funding provided by DEECD and locally-raised funds.

3. Categories of parent payments

Ringwood North Primary School can request payments from parents for student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories:

- 1. Essential Education Items** which parents and guardians are **required** to provide or pay the school to provide for their child (e.g. stationery, text books and school uniforms where required)

Essential education items are those items used in the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents and guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide.

These items include:

- materials that the individual student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. art, music, learning technology)
- school uniform (where applicable)
- essential services associated with, but not considered to be a part of, instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport and entrance costs).

2. Optional Extras which are offered on a user-pays basis and which parents and guardians may **choose** whether their child accesses or participates in (e.g. extra curricular programs or activities)

Optional extras (or non-essential materials and services) are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program
- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music, After School Care, productions, swimming)
- school-based performances, productions and events
- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/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. photography)
- school facilities and equipment not associated with the provision of 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).

3. Voluntary Financial Contributions which parents and guardians may be **invited** to donate to the school (e.g. grounds maintenance, Library computers, School Council projects).

Ringwood North Primary School will endeavour to keep this voluntary contribution at a bare minimum.

4. Communication with parents

Ringwood North Primary School will ensure all communication with parents about education items, including requests for payment is fair and reasonable.

When payment requests, letters and or CASES21 invoices for student materials and services charges are sent out we will ensure that:

- parents/guardians are required to provide essential education items for their students, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through local suppliers, where appropriate

- a clear description of each of the three parent payment categories is provided
- alternative payment options are available and an invitation is given to contact the principal if the parent wishes to discuss these
- we provide details of how payments will be spent by the school
- parents can obtain a copy of this policy.

5. Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Parents and guardians in receipt of the Victorian Government's Education Maintenance Allowance will be advised that where relevant, they have the option of providing essential education items themselves or authorising the school to direct part of the school's portion of the family's EMA towards particular items.

Parents will be informed that they are entitled to know how the EMA is being used for their child's education. Upon request, parents will be advised of the itemised cost of student materials and services on which the school proposes to spend the EMA.

Families in receipt of EMA will not be pressured into signing over their portion of EMA.

The school's portion of the EMA cannot be used to offset voluntary financial contributions unless directed by the parent.

Any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of year will be returned to the parent/guardian unless agreement is given that this money can be carried over into the next year.

6. Implementation

It is the aim of Ringwood North Primary School Council is to ensure:

- all students have access to the standard curriculum program
- parents and guardians are provided with early notice of requests for payment of essential education items and optional extras
- the advice to parents/guardians provides a clear description of the payment categories and which category items fall under and that where appropriate, parents/guardians have the option of purchasing certain items themselves
- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- payment arrangements coincide with the timing of the availability of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for eligible parents/guardians
- there is a clearly documented process for the administration of the Education Maintenance Allowance
- the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents and guardians is confidential
- parents are informed of alternative payment options and invited to contact the principal if they wish to discuss these options
- details of how funding collected will be spent are provided by the school
- payment requests or letters to parents clearly identify whether the items are essential education items or optional extras
- parents are immediately provided with a receipt upon payment
- all payments are receipted in CASES21

- payments are kept to a minimum and all requests for payment are fair and reasonable
- a copy of the school-level policy is provided to all parents.

APPROVED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL : – TO BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY