

Rationale

School councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories – essential education items, optional education items, and voluntary financial contributions.

Parents and guardians are provided with early notice of requests for payment of essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions. A minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year should be given to allow parents and guardians sufficient planning time. Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used. Payment arrangements coincide with the timing of the availability of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) support for eligible parents/guardians and that parents are not be pressured to sign over their portion of the EMA.

Aims

- To ensure No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution

Implementation

- **Parent Payment Categories**

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. These items or services are essential to support 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 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. home economics, ceramics, photography, catering);
- school uniform;
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

Optional Education items (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:

- student computer printing for personal use, internet access for recreational or non-school use;
- extra-curricular programs or activities run by outside providers e.g. instrumental music, drama class, Art club, Karate;
- school-based performances, productions and events; and school magazines, class photographs

A voluntary financial contribution is for those items and services that parent and guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds, maintenance, or building trust

Second hand uniforms

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education the school makes available second hand uniforms at minimal cost through its uniform shop.

Other support options

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. These options can be accessed by contacting the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Education Maintenance Allowance

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 be entitled for Government Assistance in the form of the Education Maintenance Allowance. Details of this allowance vary from year to year and are clearly outlined in booklist documentation.

Payment arrangements

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, the optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

Payments are kept to a minimum with payment requests and letters fair and reasonable.

Payments can be made in full or through three instalments. Payments can be made by cash, cheque, credit card, or direct deposit.

Where financial difficulties are evident, parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

Payments must commence prior to your child starting school.

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.

Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.

Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.

Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued to parents and guardians.

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

Evaluation

- * This policy will be reviewed annually by the Finance Sub Committee for school council as part of the school's regular review cycle.

Reference: www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/financial/ema.htm