PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

**Hampton Park Secondary College**

# 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[[1]](#footnote-1) 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.

**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.”**](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/PP_Costsupportforfamilies.docx)

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.**](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx)

Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see:   
[**Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents**](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/PP_FAQforparents.docx)



Parent Payment Policy



**RATIONALE**

The Victorian Government’s *Parent Payments in Victorian Government Schools* policy anticipates the creation of a parent Payment Policy at the Individual School level

**GUIDELINES**

Hampton Park Secondary College implements procedures in accordance with the Department’s policy which can be found at

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpayments.aspx>

**Parent Payment Charges**

The School Council requests payments from parents for student essential educational learning items, and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories:

1. ***essential education items and services*** that are essential to supporting the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program which parents and caregivers are **required** to provide, or pay the school to provide for their child *e.g. materials that the individual students takes possession of, stationery, text books and school uniforms; materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles; essential services associated with, but not considered to be part of, instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with the provision of outside specialists e.g. speakers; compulsory excursions which are part of course work; camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.*
2. ***optional extras*** which are offered on a user-pays basis and which parents and caregivers may **choose** whether their child accesses or participates in *(e.g. instrumental music, instrument hire, College Camps and Tours, Debutante Ball, Year 12 Formal, Valedictory Dinner and other extracurricular programs or activities).*

**3. *voluntary financial contributions*** which parents and caregivers may be **invited** to donate to the school (*e.g. Student support, School Council facilities, Building and Library Funds - tax deductible gift)*.

# Payment arrangements and methods

* Parents and caregivers will be provided with notice of requests for payment of essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions in November of the preceding year.
* Payment will be requested but will not be required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used. Parents may pay in a lump sum, or by credit card payment plans (processed through COMPASS)
* Students will not be treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
* Students will not be denied 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.
* Records of payments or contributions by parents and caregivers will be kept confidential.
* Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.
* Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice for this category will be sent to all parents and caregivers.
* Invoices for unpaid School Council Charges for essential education items and/or optional items accepted by parents will be generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a term.
* Hampton Park Secondary College administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 financial reporting.

**REFUNDS**

Where payment has been made in the previous year for an enrolment that ceases in the first month of the new academic year the parent will be entitled to a full repayment.

Where an enrolment ceases beyond the first month of Term 1, refunds will be paid for the remaining whole term(s),

e.g. if student ceases early March - refunds for Terms 2, 3, 4 are applicable

if student ceases May/June - refunds for Terms 3, 4 are applicable

Any monies owed for damage of College property will be deduction from the amount

**Family support options**

* The College Council approves a discount of 50% to all Health Care cardholders on the Material and Services Charges upon payment in full of the College charges.
* Parents will be notified via the newsletter, website and Compass of the availability of Camps, Sports and Excursion Funds (CSEF) for eligible parents/caregivers and students to support participation.
* Alternative education program will be arranged for students if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp.
* Online platforms, such as:
  + [State Schools’ Relief clk2sell app](http://www.clk2sell.com/)
  + [www.sustainableschoolshop.com.au](http://www.sustainableschoolshop.com.au)
  + trading websites (e.g. gumtree) or social media networks (e.g. private Facebook groups)

**Consideration of hardship**

* The College has a number of processes in place to support parents/caregivers who are experiencing hardship. These include individual payment plans which can be confidentially organized with the Principal Wayne Haworth or Business Manager, Imelda Kavanagh who can be contacted at the College on Phone 8795 9400 or [hampton.park.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:hampton.park.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au)

**Communication with families**

* Communication with parents will be provided with a clear description of each of the three parent payment categories, essential education items, optional education items or voluntary financial contribution.
* School Parent Payment Policy will be available on the College website. Any general enquires/concerns regarding the policy Wayne Haworth, Principal or Imelda Kavanagh, Business Manager can by contacted at the College on Phone 8795 9400 or [hampton.park.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:hampton.park.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au)

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

**School Council will be transparent in the monitoring and review the implementation of this Policy annually.**

**Date of approval by School Council 2021**

**Hampton Park Secondary College**

**Financial Support**

The following outlines the financial support available to our families and students.

1. 50% discount on Electives and Material and Services charges on commitment to pay all charges in full for parents/caregivers who hold a Health Care Card.
2. Loan of a 2nd hand Laptop
3. 6 month credit card payment plans (plans can be spread over 10 months if necessary)
4. Other plans including Bpay and further discounts can be negotiated with the Business Manager.
5. All charges may be written off after consultation with Welfare Dept, Student Managers or ELT.
6. Below is the list of visa codes that the College provides extra support for:

050 – Community Detention (bridging Visa) – full fees, laptop & uniform

100 – Spouse –Needs to be assessed on an individual case.

**(Minimum payment $100 per family + lent a computer)**

200 – Refugee – check background and make an individual decision as to level of College support and uniform organised though SSRif necessary.

**(Minimum payment $100 per family + lent a computer)**

201 – In Country Special Humanitarian - check background and make an individual decision as to level of College support.

**(Minimum payment $100 per family + lent a computer)**

202 - Global Humanitarian - check background and make an individual decision as to level of College support.

**(Minimum payment $100 per family + lent a computer)**

203 – Emergency Rescue - check background and make an individual decision as to level of College support.

204 – Women At Risk – fees – half to be paid if possible, laptop to be lent and handed back at the end of year, uniform organised though SSR

786 – Community Detention – full fees, laptop & uniform

866 – Refugee Minor – full fees, laptop & uniform

1. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)