Parent Payments

Categories Of Parent Payments

College Council 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)

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. school magazines, extra-curricular programs or activities)

3. **Voluntary financial contributions** which parents and guardians may be **invited** to donate to the school (e.g. grounds beautification, additional computers).

**Essential education items and optional extras**

The college will ensure that:

- 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 (a minimum of six weeks prior to the end of the previous school year)
- 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 articulated process for the administration of the Education Maintenance Allowance
- the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents and guardians are 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 policy is provided to all parents.

**Voluntary Financial Contributions**

College Council may invite voluntary financial contributions for:

- 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)
- a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services such as additional computers) in addition to those funded through the SRP
- donations or general voluntary financial contributions to the school
Support Options
Parents who have difficulty paying for essential items may have access to a range of support options including:

- The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which is provided by the Victorian Government to low income families to assist with the cost of educating their children. One half of the EMA is paid directly to the parents and guardians through the school, and the other half of the EMA is paid to the school to expend on behalf of the student following consultation with the parent/guardian. For more information, see http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/financial/ema/

- The School Start Bonus which was introduced by the Victorian Government in 2006 to assist parents and guardians of Prep and Year 7 students in meeting the start-up costs of sending their child to school. This initiative provides financial assistance to families for expenditure on school and sporting uniforms, school bags, books and related expenses.

- Access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the principal to assist with clothing/uniforms.

- Welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families. The school should be contacted for more information.

Where families have difficulty making payments, the principal will discuss the range of support options available, and negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by instalments.

The Principal will explore ways to make quality second-hand books and uniforms available to parents in need.

Parents and guardians who experience difficulties providing or paying the school to provide essential education items, are encouraged to make an appointment with the principal on the understanding that any discussions will be confidential.

Payment /Non-payment
The principal will ensure that:

- 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

- parents and guardians are provided with an alternative option for their children if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp

- only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice is sent to all parents and guardians

- under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by schools to obtain any funds from parents and guardians.

- any record of payments or contributions by parents and guardians is kept confidential. The public identification of students or their parents and guardians who have or have not made a payment or financial contribution is unacceptable and will not occur in any circumstance.

Approved by College Council 7/2010