



# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Banyan Fields Primary School

### 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<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- **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."](#)

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.



# Banyan Fields Primary School

## Parent Payment Policy

### PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Banyan Fields Primary School annually reviews parent payments to ensure they meet requirements set by the Department of Education & Training. Parent Payment charges are placed into categories as outlined below.

#### Essential Learning Items

Essential Learning Items includes student stationary packs, including digital programs that are used to support the classroom teaching, learning and assessment. These digital programs include Bug Club, Mathletics, Acer, SeeSaw and Sentral.

#### Optional Items

Optional Items supplement the core curriculum program. Optional Items include the \$80 excursions package, paying this upfront means individual excursions costs will not be requested throughout the year. Optional Items also include Year 6 Graduation and additional sporting activities including athletics, cross country, Hooptime and interschool sports. As well as our camping program in Years 3-6 and Year 2 Sleepover. Other optional Items may arise throughout the year. Pricing for Optional Items will be provided in the new school year.

#### Voluntary Financial Contributions

Banyan Fields Primary School does not actively seek voluntary contributions, but if you choose to make a contribution this may go towards but is not limited to; facilities and grounds works, Library, digital technologies, sporting and whole school events.

### PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

All parent payments and contributions can be made online via direct credit to the school bank account by cash, cheque, EFT via debit/credit card at the school office. Payment plans can be requested and will be granted on a case by case basis with all payments to be completed within the set timeframes outlined on approval.

### FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

A number of support options are available to families who have difficulty making payments including State Schools Relief or the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF).

### CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The school understands that families may experience financial difficulties at times. Situations of hardship should be communicated to the school as early as possible to ensure appropriate support and arrangements can be provided. If you are experiencing difficulty in making the requested payment please contact our Wellbeing Co-ordinator by phone on 9782 1333 or email [banyan.fields.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:banyan.fields.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au)

If a payment plan or alternative arrangement is granted the terms of this agreement will be explained. Any information about your financial circumstances, payment arrangements or status will be kept strictly confidential.

### COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Parent Payments Policy is developed in consultation with Banyan Fields Primary School council. This policy will be made available on the Banyan Fields Primary School website with all documentation regarding parent payments implemented in line with this policy. Parent Payment information will be made available within a reasonable timeframe prior to payments being due.

Enquiries regarding Parent Payments can be made through the office and will be passed onto the relevant party or by contacting 9782 1333 or email [banyan.fields.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:banyan.fields.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### REVIEW OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Banyan Fields Primary School council in accordance with Department of Education & Training guidelines prior to the new year's parent payment information being developed and distributed. We will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy to ensure its ongoing improvement throughout the year.

The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department's [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#).

Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see:

[Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents](#)

## APPROVAL AND REVIEW

This policy was approved by School Council on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and is scheduled for review in September 2020.

# Understanding Parent Payment Categories

