



## Parent Payment Policy

### Purpose

This policy provides information regarding parent payments to Bendigo Senior Secondary College [BSSC], and ensures that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum. The policy covers payments for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions, and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests may be made.

### Context

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program, and empowers College 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, certain 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) and senior secondary certificates - VCE and VCAL and VET programs.

### Categories of Parent Payments

BSSC College council can request payments from parents<sup>1</sup> for student materials and services charges, and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories:

- **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 college considers essential for all students, and for which students take possession. Parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the college where practical and appropriate.
- **Optional** 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** which parents and guardians are invited to donate to the college's Library Fund, the Building Fund, and/or the Parents & Citizens Association.

An *Understanding Parent Payment Categories* is attached to this policy.

### Principles

This policy adhere to the following principles:

- **Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when the college determines 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 college program is facilitated
- **Affordability:** Cost to parents is kept to a minimum and is affordable for most families at the college

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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.

- **Engagement and Support:** Early identification and engagement strategies by the college 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:** College parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by college council

### Cost and Support to Parents

This policy ensures proposed requests for parent payments costs are kept to a minimum, and are affordable to most parents. The principal 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 college
- 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 college fees (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous college year). This enables parents to save and budget accordingly.
- parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the college 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 college personnel
- parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding college fees from one year to the next
- use of debt collectors to obtain outstanding college funds owed to the college from parents is not permitted
- 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 college.

### Support for Families

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. 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.

Parents who have difficulty paying for Essential Student Learning Items may have access to a range of support options including:

- CentreLink Youth Allowance, [Newstart Allowance](#) or [ABSTUDY](#).
- Welfare and support agencies that provide further assistance to students and their families are: Anglicare, Kids Under Cover, Department of Human Services and Access Australia.
- The college exercises sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The college's Welfare support team coordinates alternative payment strategies for Essential Student Learning Items on a case-by-case basis. Payment plans can be arranged.
- Purchase of quality second-hand books and calculators are available on designated selling days.
- [Financial assistance can be accessed through the Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/csef.aspx>](#)
- [Centrepay is a free, voluntary service for Centrelink customers to pay expenses as regular deductions from their Centrelink payments at: <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/centrepay>](#)

### Voluntary Financial Contributions

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Date of Review: February 2018

Person Responsible: Finance Manager

Date of Next Review: February 2019

BSSC invites parents and guardians of students enrolled at the college, or anyone else, to make a donation in the form of a voluntary financial contribution to the college. Voluntary financial contributions are invited for the following purposes:

- contributions to the college's Library or Building funds - these funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office, and donations are tax deductible.
- contributions to the Parents and Citizens Association.
- contributions for a specific purpose identified by the college and
- general voluntary financial contributions or other donations to the college.

### Payment Arrangements and Non-payment

This policy ensures that:

- Administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 financial reporting.
- All students have access to the standard curriculum program.
- Receipts are issued to parents immediately upon payment.
- Only the initial invitation for a voluntary financial contribution, and one reminder notice is sent to a parent or guardian.
- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for essential education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by Colleges to obtain any funds from parents and guardians.

### Refunds

This policy provides for the refund of charges that have been paid by parents/guardians or students, for activities in the following circumstances:

- an excursion/incursion has been cancelled,
- the cost of an activity was over-estimated,
- eligible reimbursements where purchases are made by parents/guardians/students who have scholarships or independent support funding,
- a subject change has resulted in a lower charge,
- there has been an overpayment and,
- where there has been a duplicated payment.

### Exit Students

Where a student exits the college, relevant teachers will determine the proportional usage of materials, consumables, or resources used, to form the basis of a refund.

### Refund Payments

Refunds are paid to the parent/guardian by cheque or electronic direct deposit into a parent/guardian's designated bank account, on the completion of a *Refund Form* – available from the finance office. An independent student would also be refunded, pursuant to this policy.

### Review of Policy Implementation

The college 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 college community.

The Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department's website at

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/parentpayments.aspx>

**Annual Review**

College Council will review this policy annually, and formally minute the same.

**CERTIFICATION**

This policy was adopted at the college Council meeting held on ..... Day of March 2018.

Signed: .....

Linda Lyons  
Acting Principal

Signed: .....

College President

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## Understanding Parent Payment Categories

### Schools What does the legislation say?

The Education and Training Reform Act (2006) provides for free instruction in the standard curriculum program to all students in government schools. The Act also empowers school councils to charge fees to parents for goods and services provided by the school to a child.

In the Act, a 'Parent' includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for a child including parental responsibility under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

#### What do schools pay for as part of 'free instruction'?



Free instruction is the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the standard curriculum program, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

The standard curriculum for Years F-10 means implementation of the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

The standard curriculum for senior secondary schools means a program that enables a student to be awarded a VCE or VCAL qualification.

#### What principles govern parent payment practice?

Educational Value | Access, Equity & Inclusion | Affordability

Engagement & Support | Respect & Confidentiality | Transparency & Accountability

### Parents What may parents be asked to pay for?

#### Schools can request payment for Essential Student Learning Items



These are items, activities or services that the school deems **essential** to student learning of the standard curriculum.

Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own.

These may also be either:

##### Items the student takes temporary or permanent possession of

- e.g.
  - textbooks, activity books, exercise books
  - stationery, book bags
  - student ID cards, locks
  - cooking ingredients students will consume
  - materials for final products that students take home (technology projects, build-your-own kits, dioramas)
  - Picture Exchange Communication Systems

##### Activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend

i.e. travel, entry fees or accommodation

- e.g.
  - excursions
  - incursions
  - school sports
  - work placements



Parents can be asked to pay for items, activities and services in the three Parent Payment Categories:

Essential Student Learning Items,  
Optional Items and  
Voluntary Financial Contributions.

Schools determine how items, activities and services are classified within these categories based on the learning and teaching program of their school.

#### Schools can request payment for Optional Items

These are items, activities or services that are **optional** and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum.

Students may access these on a user-pays basis.

These may be either:

##### Items the student purchases or hires

- e.g.
  - school magazines, class photos
  - functions, formals, graduation dinners
  - materials for extra curricular programs
  - student accident insurance

##### Activities the student purchases

- e.g.
  - fees for extra curricular programs or activities, such as instrumental music tuition
  - fees for guest speakers
  - camps, excursions, incursions, sports
  - entry fees for school run performances

##### Items and/or materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum

- e.g.
  - use of silver in metal work instead of copper
  - supplementary exam revision guides

Support for families experiencing hardship is available at every school and each school has a parent payment contact person. See your school's policy for more information.

For more information on Parent Payments and Personal Devices, visit the DET website at: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

Schools can invite **Voluntary Financial Contributions** for



- e.g.
  - Building or Library fund (Tax deductible)
  - Voluntary contributions for a specific purpose, such as equipment, materials, services.
  - General voluntary contributions