

ROLLINS PRIMARY SCHOOL

RESPECT, ENCOURAGEMENT, AMBITION, CONSIDERATION AND HONESTY

Rollins Campus

Wolseley Grove, Bell Post Hill, 3215

Phone: 5278 3022 Fax: 5272 1917

Email: rollins.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

Batesford Campus

Old Ballarat Road, Batesford, 3221

Phone: 5276 1290

Web: www.rollinsps.vic.edu.au



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

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. Rollins Primary School Council is responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents 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, Rollins Primary School is adhering to the following principles:

PRINCIPLES

1. **Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when schools determine their parent payments practices.
2. **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.
3. **Affordability:** Cost to parents is kept to a minimum and is affordable for most families at the school.
4. **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.
5. **Respect and Confidentiality:** Parents and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgment and the identity and personal information of all parents and students are kept confidential in respect to parent payments.

6. **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 Rollins Primary School Councils considers 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:

1. items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
2. payment requests are broadly itemised within the appropriate category
3. parents are advised that they have the option of purchasing equivalent Essential Student Learning Items themselves, in consultation with the school
4. 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
5. 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.
6. 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
7. the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel
8. parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next
9. use of debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents is not permitted
10. there will be only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year
11. 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. The principal and School Council exercises 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.”](#) (available from the Department’s website).

SECOND-HAND STRATEGIES (Details taken from ‘Cost Support for Families’)

Schools need to be aware of second-hand options available for items commonly required by students and communicate these to parents (e.g. uniforms, stationery).

Second-hand options may include:

- A school-based uniform shop that sells second-hand items

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Rollins Primary School appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. Support options are available to assist parents, including Camps, Sport & Excursions Fund (CSEF) and State Schools Relief Committee support.

1. The [Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund \(CSEF\)](#) provides payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply and a Special Consideration eligibility category also exists.
2. [State Schools’ Relief](#) may cover the cost of new school uniforms, shoes, books and more for disadvantaged students. State Schools’ Relief only responds to requests from school principals, assistant principals or welfare coordinators. Parents or Carers who are struggling need to make an appointment with the school to discuss their situation.

COMMONWEALTH FAMILY ASSISTANCE

The Commonwealth Government provides a range of payments and services to help families look after their children’s health, education and other family issues.

- a) The Child Care Benefit helps eligible families with the cost of outside school hour's care, vacation care and registered care. For more information about eligibility and making claims, see Centrelink: [Child Care Benefit](#)
- b) To be eligible for either of the Family Tax Benefits, A or B, or a Parenting Payment, families must meet an income test. For more information, see: [Centrelink: Families](#)
- c) [Health Care Card](#) provides help with the cost of prescription medicine under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Commonwealth-funded medical services, and access to state, territory and local government concessions. Families may be eligible for a Health Care Card if they receive specific Commonwealth payments or supplements or the maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit A.
- d) [Centrepay](#) is a free, voluntary service for Centrelink customers to pay expenses as regular deductions from their Centrelink payments. Centrepay can help families to pay for many types of bills, such as education fees and expenses, child care, rent, electricity, gas and water bills, or medical services.

OTHER SUPPORT OPTIONS

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, 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. To further assist parents with payments, payment options have been developed:

- Option A **Full amount at the start of the new school year**
- Option B **Other payment arrangements***
*(Please make an appointment with the Principal or the Business Manager to discuss other payment arrangements.)

Rollins Primary School accepts payments via cash, EFTPOS, cheque, BPay and Centrepay.

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 able to contact either the Principal or the Business Manager at Rollins Primary School to discuss or make other payment arrangements. This ensures that parents/carers have a payment plan in place that they are comfortable with and a plan that the school is aware of.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

Rollins Primary School Council engages 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

1. As part of the Department's and Rollins Primary School's commitment to ongoing improvement and ensuring that the impact of policies and practices on students are assessed in an ongoing way, implementation of the Parent Payment Policy and school practice will be reviewed annually.
2. Rollins Primary School Council has a key role in ensuring the school level approach to parent payments reflects the shared expectations of the whole school community and is therefore responsible for monitoring effectiveness and the impact on parents/carers and students. The factors/measures that will be taken into account are the transparency of processes and engagement with parents. The DET Transparency Framework will be used which assists in the implementation and compliance with this policy. The framework includes a Transparency Checklist Tool that enables self-assessment of open and transparent processes and practices. This tool will be used to provide a good practice framework upon which policy implementation can be regularly reviewed and reported on.
3. The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department's [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#).
4. Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see:

[Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents](#)

EVALUATION

This policy must be formally minuted and reviewed by school council annually.

As tabled at School Council meeting Monday 19th February 2018.

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

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