PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

Rationale:

- School councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories – essential education items, optional education items and voluntary financial contributions.

Aim:

- To ensure clarity, fairness and efficiency in the management of the Parent Payments process.

Implementation:

1. Essential education items will be defined as those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents and guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. These items include:
   - materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery;
   - materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, ceramics, photography, catering);
   - school uniform;
   - transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

2. Optional education items (or non-essential materials and services) will be defined as those items that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items include:
   - extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes;
   - school-based performances, productions and events; and
   - school magazines, newsletters, class photographs.
   - Student computer printing for personal use.

3. Voluntary financial contributions are for those items and services that parents and guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, a library or building trust.

4. The school recognises that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist parents, including the, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and State Schools Relief Committee support. Parents will be advised on how to access these supports.

5. Parents have the option of providing essential education items themselves or can authorise the school to direct the family’s EMA towards particular items.

7. Parents are entitled to know how the EMA is being used for their child’s education. The school will advise parents and guardians of the itemised cost of student materials and services on which they propose to spend the EMA.

9. Any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of the year will be returned to the parent/guardian unless there is agreement reached with the parent/guardian that this money can be carried over into the next year.

10. The school will manage the parent payment arrangements to coincide with the timing of the availability of Education Maintenance Allowance.
11. 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 four weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

12. Payments will be kept to a minimum with payment requests and letters fair and reasonable.

13. Alternative payment options will be available through the school with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

14. Payments will be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

15. Payment requests or letters to parents will be itemised and the category each items falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.

16. Receipts will be issued to parents within one working day upon making payment.

17. Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.

18. Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued to parents and guardians.

19. All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians will be kept confidential.

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle.

**Resources:**