

Rationale:

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum programs. It empowers School Councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

- DET provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) and various programs. This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs.
- Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program.
- School Councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payment policy.
- There are three categories of payment – essential items, optional extras and voluntary contributions.

Purpose:

- To ensure school-level parent payment policies are processed and compliant with the DET's policy requirements.
- To ensure Great Western Primary School complies with the legislative requirements of the Education and Training Reform Act.

Implementation:

Parent Payment Charges:

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 under three categories only:

Essential Student Learning Items – 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.

In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following 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
- **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 considers the proposed requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

The School 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 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 four 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 two reminder notices 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

- The Principal is the nominated contact person for families experiencing financial difficulties and unable to meet the full or part payments requested.
- The Principal and School Council will 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 the Principal and school bursar.
- 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 arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty.
- All parents can make contact with the Principal at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- Payments can be made by instalments or in full via credit, debit, prepaid cards or BPAY
- Payment options can be discussed with the Principal
- All payment plans are confidential
- Invoices for essential learning will be invoiced at the commencement of the school year
- Invoices for unpaid essential items will be generated monthly
- Invoices for unpaid voluntary items will see a reminder issued once
- Invoices for unpaid optional items will see reminders generated monthly

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

The 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.

REVIEW OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Principal and School Council will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy annually as part of its ongoing improvement, and report back to the school community.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in

May 2019