



Parent Payments Policy

PURPOSE

To outline the ways in which school councils can request payments or voluntary contributions from parents and to ensure that parent payment practices at PPPS are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

SCOPE

- All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the curriculum requirements in the eight key learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum F-10.
- Plenty Parklands School Council only requests payments from parents under 3 categories: Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Contributions.
- Plenty Parklands School Council considers the [Financial Help for Families Policy](#) and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments.
- Plenty Parklands School Council has its parent payment arrangements approved and uploaded onto the website.
- Plenty Parklands does not:
 - deny students access to the standard curriculum program, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments not being made for education items or activities
 - request payments from parents for school operating costs (for example, utility costs) or general and unspecified charges (for example, subject levies)

DEFINITIONS

Free instruction

All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in the 8 key learning areas:

1. English
2. Mathematics
3. Sciences (including physics, chemistry and biology)
4. Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
5. The arts
6. Languages
7. Health and physical education
8. Information and communication technology and design and technology.

Free instruction includes 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.

Schools cannot deny students access to the standard curriculum program, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments not being made for education items or activities.

Schools cannot withhold student access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payments being made.

Parent payment categories

School councils can only request payments from parents under 3 categories:

1. Essential Student Learning Items

Essential Student Learning Items are items and activities which the school deems as essential for student learning, without which, students would be unable to access the school's delivery of the standard curriculum.

Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase essential items through the school or provide their own. Where a child cannot provide an essential student learning item or participate in an essential activity, the school must make alternative arrangements e.g. make the item available through the school or provide alternative financial support options.

Essential Student Learning Items do not include:

- school operating costs
- generic subject levies or fees
- non-curriculum related costs
- unspecified charges

Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity has been categorised as an Essential Student Learning Item.

2. Optional Items

Optional Items are items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students access these on a user pays basis.

Optional Items include non-curriculum-based school events, optional excursions and camps, optional sporting or music programs and materials that don't relate to the standard curriculum such as school magazines.

3. Voluntary Contributions

School councils can invite parents to make a voluntary contribution to support the school. Voluntary Contributions can be for general or clearly explained specific purposes that relate to the school council's functions and objectives. Where a Voluntary Contribution is requested for a specific purpose, the funds may only be used for that purpose.

There are no obligations on parents to make any Voluntary Contributions and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the standard curriculum if their parents do not contribute.

POLICY

Plenty Parklands Schol Council parent payment arrangements include:

- payment requests to parents for items and activities. Items and activities are clearly specified, accurately costed and itemised using the 3 categories
- financial support options for parents experiencing financial hardship
- payment methods
- having parent payment arrangements approved by school council prior to communicating it to parents

- uploading parent payment arrangements onto the school website for transparency
- using the Parent Payment Arrangements template to communicate arrangements to parents

Plenty Parklands School Council

- ensures costs to parents are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families
- considers the Financial Help for Families Policy and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments for their child
- nominates a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with parent payment arrangements
- Plenty Parklands PS has a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents who may be experiencing either short-term or long-term financial hardship.

Refer to [Financial Help for Families](#) for further information.

Refund Payment Statement

- Our school will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances.
- We will not be able to refund payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school.
- Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment.

EVALUATION

This policy is taken directly from the Department of Education and Training's Policy and Advisory Library August 11, 2020 and will be reviewed in line with new legislation, regulations and best practice.

Endorsed by School Council in May 2021