

# PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

## BELMONT HIGH SCHOOL



### 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. School councils are responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents<sup>1</sup> 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.

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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.

The attached diagram "Understanding Parent Payment Categories" provides examples of items and materials under each category.

In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following principles:

### 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 consider 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:

- 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 six 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 one reminder notice 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**

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. Principals and school councils 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 [“Cost support for families.”](#)

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 provided the name and contact details of a nominated parent payment contact person at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

## **ENGAGING WITH PARENTS**

In respect to each school’s development of its parent payments, 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**

Schools 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 school community.

The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department’s [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#).

Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see:

[Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents](#)

# 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
  - campus, 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

# BELMONT HIGH SCHOOL

## Parent Payment Policy

### PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Belmont High School makes every effort to keep the cost and number of items that need to be purchased to a minimum. We also try to ensure that the costs are affordable for all parents. If you will have difficulty making payments please make an appointment to speak to Mary Thomas to discuss possible support options and flexible payment arrangements. We guarantee that any information about your financial circumstances, payment arrangements or status will be kept strictly confidential.

**All the levies listed below can be paid for on the booklist or at the start of the year at the school's administration centre.**

**Education items:** These are items or services that are required for your child's schooling. Parents/guardians are expected to buy these items through the school, or can purchase items themselves. The school buys these items in bulk so they can be provided to parents at a significant discount. If you choose to purchase these items yourself you must consult with the school to ensure your child has the right items. Note that there may be some items or services you cannot purchase yourself.

**Optional extras:** These are materials and services that parents have the option of paying for if they wish to, e.g. class photographs and school magazines.

Please Note: Additional school charges may arise during the year.

For example: In particular, the costs of our camps have not yet been finalised but we expect that the total cost will be approximately \$160.00 for Year 7 and \$340.00 for Year 9. We also anticipate that there will be some low cost excursions planned during the year and we expect that the cost for these excursions will be around \$10-30.00 each for Years 7-12. Parents will be sent home permission forms with cost details.

**Voluntary financial contributions:** These are for items and services that parents and guardians are invited to make a donation to the school.

**EDUCATION ITEMS** Textbooks and stationery items for each subject are listed separately on the Booklist. To assist parents, the costs for the 2017 school year are listed below.

YEAR LEVEL		DESCRIPTION	COST
Years 7-12	Diary	<i>Diary/Planner</i>	\$20.00
Year 7 & 7 SEALP	Padlock	<i>Padlock – to be issued at school</i>	\$25.00
Years 10-12	Senior Administration Levy	<i>Covers extra resources, reference materials and seminars</i>	\$30.00
Years 7-12	BHS Bus Levy (Swimming, Athletics Carnival, Fun Run and Awards Day)	<i>Covers the entrance fees, buses, food, drinks, entertainment</i>	\$40.00
Years 7-12	ClickView Curriculum Library	<i>The ClickView visual library enables students to access visual resources that are linked to their year group, class and current learning topic. Visual resources are assigned by teachers to students to enrich their learning and improve student outcomes. The videos are for educational purposes and are authenticated by our Library for curriculum purposes only.</i>	\$5.00
Years 7-12	Language Levy	<i>Language Levy Online Subscription. This is an ICT levy providing access to externally sourced Language software used regularly in class and for homework.</i>	\$30.00
Years 7-10	Mathletics Levy	<i>Access to internet based software program for Year 7-9 students. Work can be set for individuals/groups at their level. Students receive instant feedback on achievements, options to pursue easier/harder tasks and can seek assistance. Students are rewarded with certificates.</i>	\$10.00
Years 11 & 12	VCAL Levy	<i>Covers a Camp, excursion, industry visits, and recognised offsite training.</i>	\$100.00

## PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

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

Belmont High School has spent considerable time selecting the most appropriate requisites to meet the needs of our students. The booklists contain high quality materials at a competitive price due to our ability to bulk order.

Parents and guardians also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications provided by the school. There may also be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.

Students will not be denied access to a particular subject due to their inability to meet the charges or levies. However, unless the relevant subject charge is paid, the student may not be provided with the higher cost materials or services relating to that subject.

### Parent Payment Categories

**Essential education items** are 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 textbooks and student stationery;
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. food technology, ceramics, photography);
- school uniform;
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

**Optional Extras** (or non-essential materials and services) are those 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, class photographs.

*Payments for attendance on interstate and overseas trips need to be **paid in full** prior to the commencement of the trip.*

**Voluntary Contributions** are for those items and services that parents and guardians are **invited** to make a donation to the school, for example the cost of replacement equipment, materials and services and grounds maintenance, as well as a library or building fund.

## FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

### Secondhand Book and Uniform Shop

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education the school operates a second hand book and uniform shop. This facility is open every Friday during the school term, from 12.45-1.30pm, in the building adjacent to the Food room.

### Second Hand Book and Uniform Sale

Secondhand books and uniforms to be sold can be brought into the office at school at any time. Books and uniforms can also be brought directly to the T-Wing between 8.30 am – 12.00 pm on **Wednesday 7th December**.

***Please ensure that when you bring sale items in, you provide your bank details for direct payments to be made into your bank account and an email address for notification of any payments made.***

The Book Sale will take place on **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December** between 5.00pm – 8.00 pm in the T-Wing T6

Unsold books and uniforms may be collected between 9.30 am – 10.30 am in the T-Wing T6 on **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December**.

## **FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS**

### **Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund**

The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund is provided by the Victorian Government to ensure that no student will miss out on the opportunity to join their classmates for important, educational and fun activities. The Department of Education and Training administers the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to assist eligible families to cover the costs of school trips, camps and sporting activities.

Although administratively the fund is received through the school, the full amount is intended for the benefit of the eligible student.

To be eligible for the fund, a parent or legal guardian of a student attending a registered Government or non-Government Victorian primary or secondary school must:

- on the first day of Term two, or;
- on the first day of Term three
- a) Be an eligible beneficiary within the meaning of the *State Concessions Act 2004*, that is, be a holder of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Centrelink Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card holder, OR
- b) Be a temporary foster parent, and;
- c) Submit an application to the school by the due date.

Parents who receive a Carer Allowance on behalf of a child, or any other benefit or allowance not income tested by Centrelink, are not eligible for the CSEF unless they also comply with one of (a) or (b) above.

The amount payable for secondary students is: \$225.00

### **State Schools Relief**

State Schools' Relief works closely with all government schools across Victoria. Each year State Schools' Relief provides assistance to families with school clothing, shoes and other essential items.

In 2017 every Year 7 government school student who is a recipient of CSEF automatically qualifies to receive a uniform pack that is provided through State Schools' Relief.

If your child receives CSEF assistance and is in Year 6 in 2016 you can ask for a uniform pack to be provided through the secondary school your child is enrolled to attend in 2017.

Parents who have already purchased their child's uniform for 2017 and then become a CSEF recipient can still apply for a CSEF Year 7 Uniform Pack in 2017.

The uniform pack includes basic uniform items needed to start secondary school.

More information about State Schools Relief and the Parent Payment Policy is on the Belmont High School website. [www.bhs.vic.edu.au](http://www.bhs.vic.edu.au)

## **CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP**

Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with Mary Thomas or Kate Dangerfield to discuss circumstances and available options. Some of these options include regular payments into the school bank account – details are available from Mary Thomas. Payments by BPay are also encouraged and the individual BPay details are indicated on the family account.

Parents are encouraged to come in to the office and discuss their particular circumstances. All parents are treated with respect and all conversations are kept in strict confidence.

If the care of the student is shared, the school can arrange for the account to be split between the carers. This needs to be organized prior to the accounts being created for next year. Please contact the school for more details. It is mandatory that both parents sign consent.

strategies to engage with parents disconnected from the school who may be experiencing hardship, such as discretely approaching families who may need support and special payment arrangements.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

Belmont High School has a Newsletter which is produced fortnightly. This newsletter is emailed to parents and also can be found on the school website.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

The Belmont High School Council is responsible for the monitoring and approval of the school's parent payments policy. A review of the implementation of the policy is conducted each year.

All parent payments and contributions can be made by cash, cheque, debit/credit card at the school's Administrative Office or in full on the booklist. Please contact Mary Thomas or Kate Dangerfield if you are unable to meet this requirement. Any record of payments or contributions is confidential.

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting payment requests. A range of support options are available to parents who have difficulty making payments including the State Schools Relief Committee support.

Families who do not have an immediate capacity to pay are able to enter into alternative and confidential payment arrangements with the school. Should you require information about financial assistance please contact the school on 5243 5355.

**Date of approval by School Council**

**(September 2016)**