

Parent Payments Policy – School communication to parents

Communicating the Parent Payments Policy to parents

Informing parents

The following talking points will assist schools in explaining the clarified Parent Payments Policy and associated arrangements to their school community.

The talking points may be useful to front office staff in answering questions about the clarified arrangements or in general communication (e.g. websites and newsletters) to inform the school community more broadly.

Schools' local context and experience will differ, so please only use those communication points that are relevant to your school.

General statement

- The Department of Education and Training has sought to clarify the Parent Payments Policy for 2022 to remove any ambiguity relating to parents' financial contributions to schools.
- Changes to how schools request contributions have been made accordingly.

Why are parent payment arrangements different now?

- The Department of Education and Training reviewed parent contribution practices across a significant number of schools last year and found some inconsistency in the way contributions were being requested and managed.
- In recognition of this, the Department has now made changes to how schools seek contributions to align practices across the system and ensure consistency. The intent is to ensure parents and schools use common terminology and have a shared understanding around parent payment arrangements.

What is specifically different?

Parent Payment Categories

- The categories under which contributions will be requested have been changed to align with the purpose of the payment:
 - o **Curriculum Contributions** (previously known as Essential Student Learning Items) support items and activities that help deliver fundamental curriculum or subject learning e.g. General classroom materials and equipment

- o **Other Contributions** (previously known as Voluntary Contributions) support the school's operation and function more generally e.g. Parent communication tools and school building enhancements
- o Payments for **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities** (previously known as Optional Items) provide for items and activities over and above what is needed to deliver fundamental curriculum learning. These *user-pays* contributions enhance the schooling experience for students e.g. Optional camps, excursions and events

A new template for communicating arrangements

- A new template is being used by all schools to communicate parent payment arrangements. The template includes the new category names to clearly define the purpose of parent payment requests and includes a one-page overview of the policy.

New payment procedures

- Internal invoicing and receipt practices have also changed in relation to the way contributions are processed. Schools will no longer send out invoices and statements for **Curriculum** and **Other Contributions**.
- Parents simply view contribution requests at the beginning of the year, then make their contributions using the payment methods provided. Parents may wish to use Compass to manage the payment process.
- Receipts must be issued to families for the contributions that they make directly to the school office.
- Invoices and statements may be received by parents for **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**. These are often confirmed throughout the year for camps, excursions, special events and other activities or items.

Communicating the voluntary nature and importance of contributions

- **Curriculum** and **Other contributions** are voluntary.
- We continue to value your contributions in supporting our school's programs and resources.
- Your contributions continue to assist us to broaden the educational experience for our students. It has allowed us to provide: a wider offering of subjects and special curriculum experiences; enhanced digital learning opportunities; the upgrade of our technology and furniture items. Without your contributions, many of these things may not be possible.
- If you are unable or choose not to make financial contributions, your child will not be disadvantaged or denied access to a selection of resources required to deliver the curriculum. We will always provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard Victorian curriculum.

- For **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**, it is up to you whether you wish for your child to have the item/participate in the activity. These are optional and provided on a user-pays basis, and so the school will require a parent payment to provide them to individual students.
- For some educational items (e.g. devices, stationery, text books), it make sense for parents to purchase them from a third-party provider, so students can take personal ownership for use at school and/or at home. The school considers the necessity of these items, the cost and preferred suppliers. The school has pre-negotiated discount prices for student stationery items (bulk prices), classroom materials, online subscriptions as well as access to shared use of technology items.
- Our school only requests contributions for items that we believe add value to the school experience for students. The contributions go specifically towards items and activities that help improve your child's educational experience.

Examples of School Messages to Parents Seeking Contributions

The following communication examples have been drawn from school letters to families from across the school system. They highlight the ways in which different schools are currently articulating to their school communities the importance of voluntary financial contributions.

It is recognised that schools' local context and experience will differ. These examples may be helpful for schools to craft their own unique message to their school communities.

Parent Payment Arrangements Templates Text

The following text is taken from the parent payment arrangements template, available on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Parent Payments Guidance tab](#).

Schools provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard Victorian curriculum and we want to assure you that all contributions are voluntary. Nevertheless, the ongoing support of our families ensures that our school can offer the best possible education and support for our students. We want to thank you for all your support. This has made a huge difference to our school and the programs we can offer.

Example of Message from Carrum PS

The following message could be included in our parent payment arrangements letters to parents:

The environment and resources that we enjoy today represent the contributions made by our parent/carer community over many years. Parent/Carers contributions make significant difference to the quality of our programs. This financial support ensures that we can continue to provide the excellent range of facilities and resources for your children.

At Carrum Primary School, we design and develop learning and teaching programs drawing on the best educational knowledge and practices and strive to offer broad and enriched opportunities to students that are above and beyond what is required in the standard curriculum and what is provided for by Government funding.

Our School Council is proud of the excellent quality of our facilities and resources available for our students to enjoy and few schools match the numerous programs we offer to cater for students' needs and interests. However, these do not come without some extra costs involved.

Within our school this support has allowed us to organise and coordinate the best possible programs outside of the traditional teaching and learning classroom structure. These financial contributions assist us with the purchasing of art, music and physical education equipment & resources as well as renewing and enhancing the provision of digital technology including robotics throughout the school; improving assessment practices to ensure teaching is targeted to a student's individual learning plan; establishing the Design Studio as focus for practical exploration of mathematics, upgrade the landscaping in the log jam playground and rollout updated technology to support teaching and learning.

Your support in 2021 allowed us to continue to offer opportunities unique to Carrum PS:

- Radio production and presentation through Carrum Kids Radio (CKR)
- Digitech Conference entry
- Friends of Carrum Foreshore
- Carrum Beach Patrol
- 'I See, I Care' (ISIC) Program
- Rum-B Run Farmlet
- Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program
- School Productions
- 5-star Sustainability program
- 'Step-up' program
- Wellbeing Program
- Host 'Big Green Schools' annual conference