

Parent Payments and Beeac PS Refund Policy

Policy

This policy outlines the ways in which school councils can request payments or voluntary contributions from parents and ensures that parent payment practices in schools are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

Summary

- 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, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).
- School councils can only request payments from parents under 3 categories: Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Contributions.
- Schools must consider the Financial Help for Families Policy and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments.
- Schools must have their parent payment arrangements approved by their school council and uploaded onto their public websites.
- 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
 - request payments from parents for school operating costs (for example, utility costs) or general and unspecified charges (for example, subject levies)

Details

Schools and school councils must adhere to the Parent Payments Policy which is outlined as follows.

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 (refer to School operating costs in the Guidance tab)
- 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.

Refer to Essential Student Learning Items in the Guidance section for further information.

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.

Financial help for families

Schools have a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents who may be experiencing either short-term or long-term financial hardship.

Schools must:

- ensure costs to parents are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families
- consider the Financial Help for Families Policy and make arrangements for families who are experiencing financial hardship and unable to make payments for their child
- nominate a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with parent payment arrangements

Beeac Primary School Refund Policy

Purpose

- To provide a fair and equitable refund system.
- To ensure that the provision of services for students (ie excursions / incursions / adventure programs / swimming programs) do not incur direct costs to the school, nor cause the school to run at a loss.

Implementation

- Where the school is charged for the provision of a program or service as a bulk cost and not a 'per head' cost, no refund is able to be given eg cost of a bus hire fee.
- Where a 'per head' fee is charged, refunds are able to be given.
- Where there is a combination of a bulk charge and a 'per head' charge in an excursion (eg visit to the zoo, the bus charge is a bulk cost and the entry fee is a 'per head' cost), only the 'per head' component is able to be refunded.
- Where an event is cancelled by the school, and is unable to be rescheduled to a later date, a refund will be provided.
- The Principal will have the capacity to review special circumstances on an individual basis.
- CSEF amounts that have been allocated to these events will not be refunded, but held in credit to be placed against other camps, sports and excursions or forwarded to another school if a child is leaving.