



4.20 PARENT PAYMENTS

POLICY

Beumaris North Primary School is committed to implementing payment practices that are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum. No student attending BNPS will be denied access to the standard curriculum program or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for educational items, services or voluntary financial contributions.

PURPOSE

The School Council is able to request payments or contributions for educational items, activities and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian Government Schools in the three categories:

- Essential Student Learning Items
- Optional Items
- Voluntary Contributions.

All administrative and financial processes are compliant with the Department of Education & Training (DE&T) requirements including Cases 21 financial reporting.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Parent payment charges:

The Education & Training Reform Act 2006 provides for instruction in the standard curriculum program to be free to all students in Government schools. “Free Instruction” is the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with instruction of the standard curriculum program, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. The standard curriculum includes core Learning and Teaching activities associated with the implementation of the Victorian Curriculum.

The Department of Education & Training (DE&T) provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP). This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs which are an integral part of the SRP. However it does not cover all costs associated with Essential Student Learning Items.

The BNPS School Council believes that the amount allocated in the SRP is insufficient for us to provide the type of education expected by the school community which is preparing our students for today’s complex world. In addition to the ‘Essential Student Learning Items’ we seek parent support with regard to the payment of ‘Optional Items’ and ‘Voluntary Financial Contributions’.

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, Optional Items and Voluntary Contributions.

Category 1 - Essential Student Learning Items are those compulsory items, activities or services that are essential to support student learning of the standard curriculum. These are items the school considers essential for all students and which students take possession of including text books, student stationery items, art supplies etc. Parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the school where practical and appropriate.

Category 2 - Optional Items are those items, activities or services that are offered in addition to 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.

Category 3 - Voluntary Financial Contributions: parents can be invited to make a donation to the school for general or specific purposes. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible.

2. Payment arrangements and methods

Beaumaris North Primary School offers flexible payment plans which provide parents with a number of instalment options and various ways to pay e.g. the school Qkr App, Credit Card, Cash or BPay. All payments are receipted in CASES21. Records of payments, contributions and any outstanding payments will remain confidential. Invoices for unpaid Essential Student Learning Items are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once per month.

Current and detailed information is provided to parents through the annual Education Contribution letter which every family in the school receives for each child enrolled. Should parents elect to pay for each of the 'Key Experiences' separately, payment will be required at least 5 business days prior to the activity.

3. Family support options and hardship provisions

The BNPS School Council appreciates that families sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. The Principal and School Council will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees. Parents who are experiencing financial difficulties are encouraged to discuss their concerns by contacting the Business Manager or the Principal. All such discussions are treated sensitively, without judgment and in complete confidence. General inquiries or concerns about parent charges may be raised at any time with the Business Manager or the Principal. There are also a range of other support options available to support and assist families including:

- Access to 'State Schools' Relief Committee' who may cover the cost of new school uniforms, shoes, books and more for disadvantaged students. This support is only available via a request from the school Principal, Assistant Principal or Wellbeing Officer. Parents need to make an appointment with the school to discuss their situation.

- Second-hand uniform items which are available through the BNPS School Uniform shop
- The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) which provides payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply. This can be done by contacting the school Business Manager at the commencement of the school year.
- Community Information and Assistance – there are a number of local services and welfare groups which can provide specialist support and assistance to students and families in financial crisis. A reference list of these organisations can be found at the end of this policy document.
- The Commonwealth Government provides a range of payments and services to help families look after their children’s health, education and other family issues. Parents and guardians should contact their local Centrelink office for more information.

4. Communication with families

- Parents will be advised of the BNPS ‘Parent Payment’ policy via the Compass portal.
- The current policy will be published in the policy section of the school website.
- Staff will be expected to be familiar with the policy and adhere to it.
- Updates or additional information will be communicated through the school newsletter.
- General inquiries or concerns about parent charges may be raised with the Business Manager or the Principal.

5. Monitoring and review of the policy

- The School council will monitor this policy to ensure it is being implemented appropriately.
- The policy will be reviewed by the Policy & Program Sub-Committee as part of the normal 3 year cycle or earlier if required.

References:

Department of Education & Training School Policy Advisory Guide:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/parentpayments.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/parentpayments.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/Pages/families.aspx>

Community Assistance Links:

<http://cris.crisisservices.org.au/>

<http://www.cisvic.org.au/>

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/communities-and-vulnerable-people/programs-services/emergency-relief>

<http://financial-counselling.org.au/>

Ratified by School Council November 2016

Next Review Date 2019