PURPOSE

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program, and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

Instruction in the standard curriculum program is provided free to all students in Victorian government schools. Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) 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. They include such things as library books, physical education equipment and teaching and learning materials for the core subjects.

School Council has the responsibility to develop policy and plans to allocate overall resources – human, financial and physical – in accordance with the goals, targets and strategies outlined in the School Strategic Plan. This includes the allocation of funding provided under the SRP, and other funding provided by DEECD, and locally raised funds.

Currently funding provided by the Federal and State Governments is insufficient to meet all of the requisite classroom materials and equipment. To provide a comprehensive curriculum, that meets the needs of the school community, and is in line with community expectations of educational standards, parental payments are required.

GUIDELINES

In line with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, School Councils can request payments from parents for student materials and services and for voluntary financial contributions. These payments fall into three categories:

1. **Essential Education Items.** These are items for which parents/guardians are required to provide, or pay the school to provide, for their child. These items include:
   a. Booklist supplies which are required to be used by students. Individual packs can be purchased via the school, which purchases in bulk to obtain a competitive price and ensures all students have the same items.
   b. Curriculum supplies which include costs for all curriculum areas, including literacy and numeracy resources, consumable items used in the classroom and specialist lessons and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources.

2. **Optional extras.** These are offered on a user pay basis which parents/guardians may choose whether their child participates. Optional extras includes camps, swimming, sporting events, visiting performers, etc.

3. **Voluntary Contributions.** These are contributions which parents/guardians are invited to donate to the school. Voluntary contributions can include ground beautification, additional computers and other capital requirements.
Parent Payment amounts will be reviewed annually as part of the school budget process.

Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by the school to obtain funds from parents and guardians.

Families who are experiencing difficulties in meeting any of the requested costs, or would prefer a tailored payment schedule during the course of the school year, are encouraged to confidentially discuss their situation with the School Principal as they may have access to a range of support options including:

- The School Start Bonus which was introduced by the Victorian Government in 2006 to assist parents and guardians of Prep and Year 7 students in meeting the start-up costs of sending their child to school. This initiative provides financial assistance to families for expenditure on school and sporting uniforms, school bags, books and related expenses.

The school Principal must exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families. The Principal is encouraged to make decisions about how to manage non-payment of Essential Education Items or Optional Extras on a case-by-case basis.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The school policy on Essential Education Items, Optional Extras and Voluntary Contributions will ensure the following:

- Parents and guardians are provided with early notice of requests for payment of Essential Education Items, Optional Extras and Voluntary Contributions. (refer template letter and account attached) A minimum of six weeks notice (in accordance with DEECD policy) prior to the end of the previous school year should be given to allow parents and guardians sufficient planning time. Payment may be requested, but not required by arrangement, prior to the students receiving their books/materials package at the commencement of the new school year.

- The school will ensure that all communication with parents about education items, including requests for payment, is fair and reasonable and will be accompanied by the following information:
  (a) That parents and guardians are required to provide Essential Education Items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school, or through a local supplier, where appropriate:
  (b) The category each item falls under will be clearly identified as Essential Education Item, or Voluntary Contribution:
  (c) The availability of alternative payment options for parents who are experience financial difficulties and an invitation to contact the Principal if the parent or guardian wishes to discuss these:
  (d) Details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the school:
  (e) A copy of this policy is available on the website of through the school office

- All Essential Education Items must be paid for before Optional Items or Voluntary Contributions, unless approved by the Principal.

- Items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- Administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 Financial reporting

- Receipts will be issued to parents and guardians upon payment with clear information separating Essential Education Items from other payments for Tax Refund purposes

- The status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents and guardians are confidential. The public identification of students or their parents and guardians who have not made a payment or financial contribution is unacceptable and must not occur in any circumstance.

- Students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for Essential Education Items, Optional Extras or Voluntary Contributions.

- The school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment of the essential education items, optional extras of voluntary contributions.

- All students have access to the standard curriculum program

- The Principal will ensure that all staff are familiar with and adhere to this policy

- Parents and guardians are provided with an alternative option for their children if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp

- Invoices for unpaid Essential Education Items or Optional Items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month

- Only the initial invitation from Voluntary Contributions and one reminder notice is sent to all parents and guardians

EVALUATION

Parental knowledge, understanding, support and feedback in relation to the contents of this policy.

This policy will be evaluated in line with School Council cyclical review of policy documents and school and DET priorities.
Parent Information Template Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides that instruction in the standard curriculum program is delivered free to all students in Victorian Government schools, this is referred to as “free instruction”. The Act also grants school councils the power to charge fees for goods and services to support the delivery of free instruction and to raise funds.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities related to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Parent Payments in Victorian Government Schools policy provides advice on the different types of payments that schools may request from parents and outlines the procedures and protocols schools must adhere to.

School councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payment policy that is compliant with the Department’s policy.

There are three areas for which parents may reasonably be requested to make a payment or contribution:

- **Essential education items** which parents and guardians are **required** to provide or pay the school to provide for their child (for example, stationary, text books and school uniforms where required);
- **Optional Education items** which are offered on a user-pay basis and which parents and guardians may **choose** whether their child accesses or participates in (for example, school magazine, swimming or extra curricular programs or activities etc); and
- **Voluntary Contributions** which parents and guardians may be **invited** to donate to the school

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children are provided with essential education items. The school makes every effort to keep the cost of items that need to be purchased to a minimum. Parents also have the option of providing essential education items themselves.

The Hamilton Gray Street Primary School council has made a considerable effort to ensure that this school policy is fair and provides a number of options to support parents to access materials and services associated with their child’s education.

This information is provided to comply with DET requirements and allow parents/guardians sufficient time to budget for the earlier timing of the required Parent Payments in the 2015 year.

The enclosed account provides comprehensive details of the Parent Payment amount applicable for the 2015 year, including the support available to parents under the School Bonus system, and it would be appreciated if the payment is made/arranged prior to the commencement of the 2015 school year to enable your child to receive their books/materials package on the first day of school.

Current funding provided by the Federal and State Governments is simply insufficient to meet all of the requisite classroom materials and equipment.

To provide a comprehensive curriculum, that meets the needs of the school community, and is in line with community expectations of educational standards, you will note that School Council this year is seeking your continued support in assisting deliver the best possible educational outcomes for our children by inviting all parents to make a $25.00 voluntary contribution to complete the purchase of additional computer equipment to benefit your child’s education. Your support of this request will be greatly appreciated.

If you have any queries, or wish to discuss your circumstances and the options available to you, please contact me to make an appointment.

Further information:


The parent payment policy is available through the office or the website [www.hamiltonpss-grayst.vic.edu.au](http://www.hamiltonpss-grayst.vic.edu.au)
Yours sincerely
Principal