



Parent Payment Policy

1. Purpose

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the Standard Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum) and families understand the financial rules around entry into and continued participation in the French Elective at Caulfield Junior College.

2. Background and 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 parents¹ 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. ***The French Elective at Caulfield Junior College is considered an Optional Item Above the Standard Curriculum – see point 8 for further information.***

¹ 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.

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.

The attached diagram (Appendix 3.0) "**Understanding Parent Payment Categories**" provides examples of items and materials under each category, including those Voluntary Financial Contributions that are tax-deductible. A statement for those items can be produced on request to the Business Manager.

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

3. 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

4. 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.

5. Support for families

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. School 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.

6. 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.

7. Implementation of Payments Policy

Caulfield Junior College’s parent payment practices are informed by and compliant with the Department’s Parent Payment Policy. The tables and subsequent information (including appendices) below outline how payments are invoiced.

All families, including those in the French Elective (which is considered above the Standard Curriculum) are asked to contribute towards the *Caulfield Junior College Education Contribution Payments* (the ‘Education Contribution’) as outlined in Appendix 1.0.

I. Guidelines for Parent Payment of Education Contribution for the Standard Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum)

a. Prior Notice of Invoice

Parents must be provided with notice of annual payment requests a minimum six weeks before the end of the previous school year.

b. Payment of Education Contribution

It is the schools' preference that Education Contribution payment is made upfront, however payments can also be made in four (4) monthly instalments, per the below table:

		Due Date
Option 1 - Upfront Payment		31 st December 2016
Option 2 - Installments	Installment 1 - 25% of Total	15 th January 2017
	Installment 2 - 25% of Total	15 th February 2017
	Installment 3 - 25% of Total	15 th March 2017
	Installment 4 - 25% of Total	15 th April 2017

See Appendix 1.0 *Caulfield Junior College Education Contribution 2017* for cost and itemisation.

II. Family Support Options

- Families may be eligible for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF). See the Business Manager for further details.
- Families may be able to access support from the State Schools' Relief, an autonomous, charitable organisation that assists students experiencing short term crises and long term chronic needs attending government schools in Victoria with school clothing, footwear, textbooks and other essential items. Schools can apply to State Schools' Relief for this support. See the Business Manager for further details.
- Items, such as school uniform, can be purchased second-hand through the Caulfield Junior College Parents Committee.
- Families in the French Elective can apply for assistance through the Bourse Scolaire. See the French Elective Director for further details.

III. Hardship

- To apply for Hardship consideration, an appointment will need to be made with the Business Manager. In consultation with the School Principal, the Business Manager can arrange for a payment plan to be written.
- Hardship cannot be considered for families enrolled in the French Elective as it is considered above the Standard Curriculum.
- See Appendix 2.0 *Supporting Families Experiencing Hardship* for further information.

8. Guidelines for payment of Parent Levy for French Elective (Optional Item Above Standard Curriculum)

- In addition to the contribution towards the *Caulfield Junior College Education Contribution Payments* (as outlined in Appendix 1.0), students can be enrolled (per the Enrolment Policy) in the French Elective (which is considered an Optional Item above the standard curriculum).

- The French Elective is funded through the Student Resource Package and is supplemented by the French Elective Parent Levy. The Parent Levy is set and reviewed by the School Council each year.
- Entry into and / or continued participation in the French Elective is contingent on paying the French Elective Parent Levy and the CJC Education Contribution within the timeframes specified at the time of offer. Entry into the French Elective cannot be granted if these payments are not made.
- Expatriate families (defined as families who have their Parent Levy paid by an employer) are expected to pay the upfront payment by the due date, or the pro-rata amount at the time of enrolment as advised by the Business Manager.
- There will be no discounting of the Parent Levy for siblings, expatriates or children of teachers in the French Elective.
- A discount of 5% for Upfront Payments will be applicable if paid by the due date, as outlined below.
- It is School Council's preference that payment of the French Elective Parent Levy is made upfront for all students, however alternative payment options are available as outlined below:

		Amount (%)	Due Date
Option 1 – Upfront Payments		100% of Total Payments (Minus 5% Upfront Payment Discount)	31 st December 2016
Option 2 – Installments	Installment 1	50% of Total Payments	31 st December 2016
	Installment 2	25% of Total Payments	30 th March 2017
	Installment 3	25% of Total Payments	23 rd June 2017
Option 3 - Monthly Payments		8 times 12.5% of Total Payments	15 th of each month from January to August

I. Non-Payment of Parent Levy

- Students may not enter / remain in the French Elective at the start of a new term if payments from any term prior (including the months within that term, if paying per month) are not paid by the due date.
- If, after a payment reminder has been issued by the school and the French Elective Parent Levy remains unpaid, the student will be removed from the French Elective at the start of the term and placed in the Standard Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum), subject to spaces being available in the applicable year level.

II. Entry to the French Elective During School Year

- Students entering the French Elective during the year will be charged on a pro-rata basis from the beginning of the term of entry.

III. Withdrawal from the French Elective

- Re-enrolment in the French Elective is not guaranteed in the case of withdrawal.

- No refunds of fees will be made in case of any withdrawal or any temporary absence from the French Elective.
- Students are still enrolled in the French Elective during a temporary absence and the Parent Levy is to be paid in accordance with this policy.
- If parents choose not to pay the Levy during any absence or withdrawal, students will not retain their place in the French Elective. If a place becomes available, all outstanding Levy charges will need to be paid before an offer can be made.

IV. Refunds

- There is no provision for refunds on the French Elective Parent Levy, including student withdrawals or any temporary absences.

Appendices

- Appendix 1.0 *Caulfield Junior College Parent Education Contribution 2017.*
- Appendix 2.0 *Supporting Families Experiencing Hardship.*
- Appendix 3.0 *Understanding Parent Payment Categories.*

Evaluation

This policy will be accessible via the school website and on request at the school office. The school 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.