POLICY: SCS3: Parent Payment Policy and Implementation	Issued: February 2025
REVIEW: February 2026	Approved: Sue Holmes (Principal)

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

POLICY

This Parent Payments Policy outlines the ways in which school councils can request financial contributions from parents and ensures that parent payment practices in schools are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the Curriculum.

SUMMARY

- Victorian government schools must provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the curriculum requirements in the 8 key learning areas as outlined in the Victorian Curriculum F–10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the VCE VM
- School councils may request parents make voluntary financial contributions towards the cost of schooling under 2 categories: Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions.
- School councils may invite parents to purchase Extra-Curricular Items and Activities – items, activities and services that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside of the school's delivery of the Curriculum (including alternative forms of instruction). These are provided on a user-pays basis.
- School councils may invite parents to supply or purchase their own educational items to use and to own. If a student does not provide or purchase their own educational items, the school must ensure the student has free access to what is needed at school to access the school's delivery of the Curriculum.
- Schools must follow the requirements on finance and communications set out in the guidance.

DETAILS

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 Curriculum, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

Schools cannot deny students access to the Curriculum, refuse instruction or disadvantage students on the basis of payments and financial contributions not being made. Schools cannot withhold student access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payments being made.

Schools are not required to ensure students have free access to items on a one-to-one basis, however, schools must determine a reasonable level of resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant items for the duration they are required. Schools also need to consider the most appropriate arrangements to facilitate student access to required items.

Parent payment categories

School councils may request parents make voluntary financial contributions and payments to the school under the following categories. There are no obligations on parents to make any voluntary financial contributions and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if their parents do not contribute.

Refer to appendix 1 for further information regarding these categories.

Curriculum Contributions

Curriculum Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum. Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity has been categorised as necessary to the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Other Contributions

Other Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives. They can be requested for a broad area of school need or itemised for a clearly explained specific purpose.

Tax Deductible Contributions
Tax deductible contributions made per family to towards Sherbrooke community school"

- Building fund (to support renovations, upgrades, and maintenance of school infrastructure)
- Library fund (to support book purchases and other equipment that sustain the library as a valuable resource)

Vocational Educational Training (VET)
From 2022, the Department will reimburse VET material fees to government schools to address the cost barrier for families. This funding covers the costs of:

- Materials required for training and assessment that are consumed and cannot be recycled. **Please note students may wish to upgrade materials for certain projects (i.e. upgrade from pine to mahogany). Any upgrade from the materials is considered an OPTIONAL ITEM, as per the description above.**
- Safety items worn or used by the student including safety glasses, hearing protection, gloves, hair nets.
- Workbooks, handouts, photocopying, online learning resources
- Class sets, intended to be returned and retained by the school, such as textbooks, tools, tool belts, specialist knives, aprons

However, this funding does not cover all costs associated with the facilitation of VET classes. The payment of the following costs are supported by Voluntary Financial Contributions from families, as detailed in the 2022 VOLUNTARY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS SCHEDULE above:

- Transport costs and hire of specialized facilities required for training or assessment
- PPE worn and retained by the student
- Online registration/subscription fees, platform charges, software
- Tuition fees, registration, and administration fees
- Tools upgrade or purchase initiated by the parent

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are provided on a user-pays basis. They include optional excursions and camps, optional sporting or music programs, and materials that don't relate to the Curriculum such as school magazines.

Purchase of educational items for students to own

School councils may also invite parents to supply or purchase educational items to use and to own. If a parent does not provide or purchase their own educational items, the school must ensure the student has free access to what is needed at school to access the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

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.

Implementing the policy in schools

Schools must:

- follow the finance requirements set out in the guidance
- follow the communication requirements set out in the guidance
- use the templates provided by the Department to create and communicate their parent payment arrangements
- follow all monitoring and compliance requirements as directed by the Department.

Schools develop their parent payment arrangements to suit the contextual needs and aspirations of their school community while ensuring their arrangements remain in alignment with this policy.

Schools must not:

- refuse instruction of the Curriculum to a student if parents do not make a parent payment or purchase any Extra-Curricular Items and Activities or their own educational items
- discriminate, harass or coerce parents or students in relation to payments
- approach students regarding any payments
- undertake debt recovery activities for any payments
- ask parents to pay for reasonable adjustments for children with a disability
- publish parent payment arrangements and school policies that are inconsistent with these requirements.

DEFINITIONS

The Curriculum
The Curriculum is the Victorian Curriculum F–10, Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and VCEVM

RELATED POLICIES

- Digital Learning in Schools
- Finance Manual — Financial Management for Schools
- Financial Help for Families
- School Council — Powers and Functions
- Student Dress Code
- Students with Disability
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) Delivered to Secondary Students

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Education Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

CONTACTS

Schools

For support with the Parent Payments Policy and your school's parent payment arrangements, you can contact the Parent Payments Team on 1800 955 913 or email parent.payments@education.vic.gov.au

Parents

For general queries about the Parent Payments Policy you can contact the Department's general enquiries line on 1800 338 663 or email enquiries@education.vic.gov.au

If you have any queries in regards to your school's parent payment arrangements please speak with your school first.

APPENDIX 1

Letter to parents

Dear parent/guardian,

Sherbrooke Community School is looking forward to another great year of teaching and learning and would like to advise you of Sherbrooke Community School's voluntary financial contributions for 2025.

Schools provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements 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, whether that is through fundraising or volunteering your time. This has made a huge difference to our school and the programs we can offer.

For further information on the Department's Parent Payments Policy please see a one-page overview attached.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Holmes

PARENT PAYMENTS POLICY

ONE PAGE OVERVIEW

FREE INSTRUCTION

- Schools provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in Victorian Curriculum F-10, VCE and VCAL.
- Schools may invite parents to make a financial contribution to support the school.

PARENT PAYMENT REQUESTS

Schools can request contributions from parents under three categories:

Curriculum Contributions	Other Contributions	Extra-Curricular Items and Activities
Voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum.	Voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives.	Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum. These are provided on a user-pays basis.

- Schools may also invite parents to supply or purchase educational items to use and own (e.g. textbooks, stationery, digital devices).

FINANCIAL HELP FOR FAMILIES

- Schools put in place financial hardship arrangements to support families who cannot pay for items or activities so that their child doesn't miss out.
- Schools have a nominated parent payment contact person(s) that parents can have a confidential discussion with regarding financial hardship arrangements.

SCHOOL PROCESSES

- Schools must obtain school council approval for their parent payment arrangements and publish all requests and communications for each year level on their school website for transparency.

EVALUATION

This policy was last ratified by School Council in…….. and should by reviewed

by ……

Signed:……Principal

…….School Council President