

Parent/Carer Payment Policy 2016

General Statement

This policy provides information regarding parent/carers payments in government schools. The policy covers payments for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions that schools may request, and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests may be made.

Rationale

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* ensures 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. Northern School for Autism School Council may request payments or contributions for education items and services from the parents/carers of students in Victorian government schools in the three categories – essential education items, optional education items and voluntary financial contributions.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and senior secondary certificates (VCE, VCAL and VET programs).

Aims

- To ensure school-level parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the DET's policy requirements.
- To ensure the Northern School for Autism complies with the legislative requirements of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

Implementation

Parent/carers Payment Categories

1. **Essential education items** are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents and guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. These items include:
 - materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery;
 - materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. cooking program); and
 - transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.
2. **Optional education items** (or non-essential materials and services) are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items include:
 - student computer printing for personal use, internet access for recreational or non-school use;
 - extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes, swimming;
 - school-based performances, productions and events; and
 - school magazines, newsletters, class photographs.
3. **Voluntary financial contributions** are for those items and services where parents and guardians are **invited** to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, a library or building trust. NSA does not request voluntary contributions.
 - At all times, the Principal will exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual families and will make decisions on a case-by-case basis.
 - Where families have difficulty making payments, the Principal will encourage parents/guardians to make an appointment to discuss with them the range of support options available, and to negotiate an appropriate

alternative arrangement, such as payment by installments, directing the parent to Centrelink for the Schoolkids Bonus, obtaining support from State Schools Relief, accessing the Camps, Sports & Excursions Fund and welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools.

- The Principal will also explore ways in which quality second-hand uniforms could be made available to families.

Support Options

NSA appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments . Parents/carers are requested to contact the school if they require financial support. From 2015 the Education Maintenance Allowance is no longer available.

Payment Arrangements

Parents/carers will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

To assist parents with payments, several payment schedules are available:

- Full amount
- Payment at the beginning of each term
- Half yearly payment (beginning of Terms 1 & 3)
- Other payment arrangements by negotiation

Several payment options are also available:

- BPay
- Eftpos
- Cheque
- Direct Deposit
- Credit Card
- Cash

Payment requests will be kept to a minimum, will be fair and reasonable

- Payments may be requested at, but not required prior to, the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- The Parent/Carer Payment Policy and PPI will be attached to invoices for both essential education items and optional education items.
- Receipts will be issued to parents/carers immediately upon making payment.
- Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items will be generated and distributed once a term.
- All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents/carers are kept confidential.

References:

School Policy and Advisory Guide <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/spag/default.htm>

Review: This policy is reviewed annually in Term 3.

First Ratified by NSA School Council: 30.10.2014

Re-ratified: 29.10.15

Parent/Carer Payments - processes, protocols and implementation

Parent/carers payments 2016

There will be no voluntary contributions requested in 2016. The voluntary contribution cost will be absorbed into essential education items. An increase to accommodate price rises (inflation) is incorporated into the payment schedule each year. Program costs vary according to the age of students as per the state government CELF funding. The total cost for essential educational items will be **\$115 per term/ \$460 per year** as per the itemised list below:

Essential Education Items – Primary Aged Students

- \$10 - Bike Education
- \$10 - eLearning (iPads, computers, educational software & licenses)
- \$10 - Communication/Literacy Materials (schedules, PECs folders, visuals, personalised readers communication temptations)
- \$10 - Consumables (stationery, laminating, sensory materials, reinforcers)
- \$31.25 - Excursion/Incursion Fee (\$125 annually)
- \$30 - Cooking Fee (previously this was paid weekly in cash to classrooms)
- \$3.75 - Mothers' Day/Fathers' Day Stall (previously paid in cash)
- \$10.00 - Special lunches, Yearbook, Concert DVD and Library Books
- \$115.00 - Total**

Essential Education Items – Secondary Aged Students

- \$10 - Bike Education
- \$10 - eLearning (iPads, computers, educational software & licenses)
- \$10 - Communication/Literacy Materials (schedules, PECs folders, visuals, personalised readers communication temptations)
- \$10 - Consumables (stationery, laminating, sensory materials, reinforcers)
- \$56.25 - Excursion/Incursion Fee (\$225 Annually)
- \$10 - Cooking Fee (previously this was paid weekly in cash to classrooms)
- \$3.75 - Mothers' Day/Fathers' Day Stall (previously paid in cash)
- \$5 - Yearbook
- \$115.00 - Total**

Discount on Essential Educational Items: parents/carers who make the full annual payment for essential educational items by the end of Term 1 will be provided with a 10% discount.

Optional Education Items: the swimming program costs approximately **\$100 per term** depending upon the number of sessions offered. Parents/carers will be invoiced the end of the term prior to swimming being offered. Swimming is an optional program. If parents/carers elect for their child not to participate in swimming then they do not have to pay the fee. For students in the Later Years Sub-school, TAFE is an optional program which requires a separate payment. Swimming costs may be covered by CSEF payments for eligible families.

Voluntary Contributions; there are no voluntary contributions.

Tax deductions for parents/carers for payments made to NSA: due to changes in legislation, reimbursement to parents/carers, for costs associated with educating children, are now reimbursed automatically via Human Services – Schoolkids Bonus payment. For more information follow the link:
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/information/schoolkids-bonus>.

CSEF - Camps Excursion Program funding information

The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) will run over four years and provide 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. **\$125** per year will be paid for eligible primary school students, with **\$225** per year paid for eligible secondary school students. Payments will go directly to the school and be tied to the student.

To be eligible for the fund, a parent or legal guardian of a student attending a registered Government or non-government Victorian primary or secondary school must:

- on the first day of Term two, or;
- on the first day of Term three;
 - a) Be an eligible beneficiary within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004, that is, be the holder of a Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Centrelink Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder, OR
 - b) Be a temporary foster parent, and;
 - c) Submit an application to the school by the due date.

Parents who receive a Carer Allowance on behalf of a child, or any other benefit or allowance not income tested by CentreLink, are not eligible for the CSEF unless they also comply with one of (a) or (b) above.

How to Apply

Contact the school office to obtain a CSEF application form.