



THOMASTOWN MEADOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

At Thomastown Meadows Primary School, we are honest, respectful and show empathy. We are happy, active and independent learners contributing positively to society.

Purpose

Thomastown Meadows Primary School has a Parent payment policy to ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum within the school community.

Rationale:

Thomastown Meadows Primary School 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. At Thomastown Meadows Primary School we make decisions to 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 the Thomastown Meadows Primary School community.

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.

Parent Payment Charges

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 parents 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. Essential learning resources include:

- Photocopying of communication and classroom activities to
- Paper
- Subscriptions
- textbooks, activity books, exercise books
- stationery, book bags
- cooking ingredients students will consume as part of their learning programs
- Science ingredients as required
- materials for final products that students take home (technology projects, build-your-own kits, dioramas)
- Picture Exchange Communication Systems
- APPs

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. Optional items include:

- Instrumental Program
- Tutoring

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. Voluntary contributions include:

- Technology Levy
- Grounds beautification

Please note: Thomastown Meadows currently has no request for voluntary contributions

Payment arrangements and methods

We understand at Thomastown Meadows Primary School that some families from our community may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments as requested. We exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees.

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.

Family support options

There are a range of support options available to support and assist parents. These options include:

- a payment plan with regular ongoing payments
- Second-hand uniforms available from school
- loaned resources from the school through consultation
- CSEF
- State Schools' Relief
- Student Scholarships or sponsorship programs if relevant
- Community assistance with local services and welfare groups which can provide specialist support and assistance to students and families in financial crisis.
- Crisis Referral Information System (CRIS) Online Directory provides a broad range of information for people seeking welfare assistance, advice and general referral and support. The online directory contains comprehensive information on services and organisations such as those providing support in respect to accommodation, domestic violence, drug & alcohol treatment, health, material aid and mental health.
- Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic) is the peak body representing local community information and support services. Its member agencies assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services including emergency relief.
- Emergency Relief (ER) Victoria is the peak body for the Victorian emergency relief sector, with over 100 member organisations offering material aid and support to families experiencing a financial crisis or emergency.
- Financial Counselling Victoria (FCV) is a non-profit organisations providing financial counselling through advocacy and information to disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community. FCV can provide advice over the phone, email or in person and can assist with referrals to other community and government support such as legal advice, material aid, and emergency relief.
- The Commonwealth Government provides a range of payments and services to help families look after their children's health, education and other family issues.
- The Child Care Benefit helps eligible families with the cost of outside school hours care, vacation care and registered care. For more information about eligibility and making claims, see Centrelink: Child Care Benefit
- Centrepay is a free, voluntary service for Centrelink customers to pay expenses as regular deductions from their Centrelink payments. Centrepay can help families to pay for many types of bills, such as education fees and expenses, child care, rent, electricity, gas and water bills, or medical services

Consideration of hardship

Should you be experiencing financial hardship and you require support please make an appointment to discuss your concerns further with the Principal and or Business Manager on the school details.

Communication with families

The **Parent Payment** policy will be included in the newsletter to ensure that there is transparency within the school community regarding what parents are required to pay for and the evidence of this. The policy will also be included as part of the end of year student requisite information and will also be made available to the Thomastown Meadows School community through the website and upon request at the front office.

Monitoring and review of the implementation of the policy

At Thomastown Meadows Primary School, the School Council will monitor the implementation of the Parent Payment policy and review annually as part of the end of year process.

Evaluation:

This policy was ratified at school council and will be reviewed annually as part of the end of year process.

Date of approval by School Council March 2019

Understanding Parent Payment Categories

Schools

What does the legislation say?

The Education and Training Reform Act (2006) provides for free instruction in the standard curriculum program to all students in government schools. The Act also empowers school councils to charge fees to parents for goods and services provided by the school to a child.

In the Act, a 'Parent' includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for a child including parental responsibility under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

What do schools pay for as part of 'free instruction'?



Free instruction is the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the standard curriculum program, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

The standard curriculum for Years F-10 means implementation of the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

The standard curriculum for senior secondary schools means a program that enables a student to be awarded a VCE or VCAL qualification.

What principles govern parent payment practice?

Educational Value | Access, Equity & Inclusion | Affordability
Engagement & Support | Respect & Confidentiality | Transparency & Accountability

Parents

What may parents be asked to pay for?

Schools can request payment for Essential Student Learning Items



These are items, activities or services that the school deems **essential** to student learning of the standard curriculum.

Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own.

These may also be either:

Items the student takes temporary or permanent possession of

- e.g.
- textbooks, activity books, exercise books
 - stationery, book bags
 - student ID cards, locks
 - cooking ingredients students will consume
 - materials for final products that students take home (technology projects, build-your-own kits, dioramas)
 - Picture Exchange Communication Systems

Activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend

i.e. travel, entry fees or accommodation

- e.g.
- excursions
 - incursions
 - school sports
 - work placements

Parents can be asked to pay for items, activities and services in the three Parent Payment Categories:

Essential Student Learning Items,
Optional Items and
Voluntary Financial Contributions.

Schools determine how items, activities and services are classified within these categories based on the learning and teaching program of their school.

Schools can request payment for Optional Items

These are items, activities or services that are **optional** and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum.

Students may access these on a user-pays basis.

These may be either:

Items the student purchases or hires

- e.g.
- school magazines, class photos
 - functions, formals, graduation dinners
 - materials for extra curricular programs
 - student accident insurance

Activities the student purchases

- e.g.
- fees for extra curricular programs or activities, such as instrumental music tuition
 - fees for guest speakers
 - camps, excursions, incursions, sports
 - entry fees for school run performances

Items and/or materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum

- e.g.
- use of silver in metal work instead of copper
 - supplementary exam revision guides

Support for families experiencing hardship is available at every school and each school has a parent payment contact person. See your school's policy for more information.

For more information on Parent Payments and Personal Devices, visit the DET website at: www.education.vic.gov.au

Schools can invite **Voluntary Financial Contributions** for



- e.g.
- Building or Library fund (Tax deductible)
 - Voluntary contributions for a specific purpose, such as equipment, materials, services.
 - General voluntary contributions