



Wonthaggi Secondary College

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

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1: GLOSSARY

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 the child normally or regularly resides.

Free instruction: Is the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the standard curriculum program.

Standard curriculum: For Years Prep to 10 means implementation of the Victorian Curriculum F-10. The standard curriculum for senior secondary schools (Years 11 & 12) means a program that enables a student to be awarded a VCE or VCAL qualification.

SSR: State Schools Relief organisation.

C.S.E.F: (Camp, Sport and Excursion Fund). This is a \$225 per student, State Government assistance package available to eligible Pension and Health Care card holders. It can only be used towards school camps, sport transport or school excursions.

Family Assistance Package: Means tested cash funds to assist parents who have an occupation code of "N" or "D". These funds are paid directly to the school and are to be administered at the College's discretion to assist eligible families.

Year 7 uniform package: Parents of Year 7 students who are eligible for C.S.E.F. are entitled to a free basic uniform pack consisting of: polo shirt, trousers or shorts or skirt or dress, jumper or windcheater, sports top, sports shorts.

2: PURPOSE

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

3: 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 contributions, in all forms, assist schools to provide an enriched learning and teaching program.**

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 why payment charges approved by School Councils may vary from one school to the next.

4: LEGISLATION

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of 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 College to the child.

5: OBJECTIVE / AIM / IMPLEMENTATION

This policy sets out what the College is expected to provide and what the parent is expected to provide at Wonthaggi Secondary College. The aim of the Parent Payment Policy is to provide guidance to the College community and administration on how the school provides free instruction of a standard curriculum program and to clarify how the School Council will identify and recover costs for goods and services provided for instruction outside the standard curriculum program in a reasonable way. The College Principal is responsible for the implementation and administration of this policy.

6: PRINCIPLES

In implementing this policy the College will adhere to the following principles:

Educational value: Items students consume or take possession of will be accurately costed. School Council will consider all proposed requests for parent payments and ensure the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

Access, equity and inclusion: All students will have access to the standard curriculum program and participation of all students to the full school program will be facilitated. The College Principal will be responsible for ensuring that:

- Students are not treated differently, refused instruction or denied access to the standard Curriculum program on the basis of payments not being made for **essential** items and services or **voluntary** financial contributions.
- Students enrolled in an **optional** or **elective** subject/activity are fully aware that they are expected to pay any related charge associated with the subject or activity. Any student who has not paid the subject or activity charge associated with an **optional** or **elective** subject/activity might not be enrolled in that subject or **elective** in following years.
- Students who do not participate in an excursion or camp are provided with an alternative option for the period of the 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 term.
- Under no circumstances will collectors of any type be used by the school to obtain any funds from parents or guardians.
- The payment details for all parents are kept strictly confidential.
- Only one initial and one reminder notice for **voluntary** contributions will be sent to parents in any given school year.

Affordability: In setting the fees and charges, the College will consider the following:

- The significant cost of textbooks. Where possible, the College will provide Class Sets to reduce the overall cost of the booklist to parents. The cost of updating, maintenance, replacement and introduction of new textbooks will be covered by the year level **Essential** Item Charge.
- The significant cost of some excursions can exclude some students on economic grounds. To make excursions affordable to all students, the school will, where possible, subsidise the cost of excursions from the year level **Essential** Items Charge.

- The school offers a number local area excursions (ie: Coal Mine, Kilcunda, Harmers Haven, Inverloch etc...) where the cost per head is quite small. We will not charge for these small trips on each occasion. The cost of these excursions has been factored in to the year level **Essential** Item Charge.
- Sporting teams vary in size from 6 to 22 but a bus costs the same regardless of numbers. Sport transport will be capped (currently \$10) so that sport is affordable to all students. Any shortfall in bus costs will be covered from student engagement funding.
- The College acknowledges the importance excursions play in student engagement and learning. Some excursions can be very costly and effectively price some students out of attending. To make excursions affordable to all, the cost of excursions will be capped at \$20. The shortfall will be covered from student engagement funding.
- The College hires Guest Presenters, Motivational Speakers and Performers from time to time. Where these events incur a **small** cost per head (up to \$10) the College will not ask for payment. The cost will be covered by the year level **Essential** Item Charge.

Engagement and support: The College Principal is responsible for ensuring that all early identification and engagement strategies are developed and implemented by the school. The Principal will ensure parents are well informed of the payment options and support network available for those experiencing hardship.

Respect and confidentiality: The College Principal will ensure that 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 is kept confidential in respect to parent payments.

Transparency and accountability: The College Principal will ensure that school parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by School Council. The Principal will implement the following strategies:

- Communicate this policy within the school and ensure that all staff are familiar with it and adhere to it.
- Provide parents with a reasonable period of notice for payment of **essential, optional** or **Voluntary** financial contributions.
- Ensure, where possible, that payment arrangements coincide with the availability of financial support options.
- Ensure the school **will not** withhold access to enrolment or advancement of a student to the next year level as a condition of payment of **essential, optional** or **voluntary** items.
- Keep the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents strictly confidential.

All disputes regarding payment requests should be made directly to the College Principal or Business Manager.

7: PARENT REQUIREMENTS

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 College-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents under three categories only: **essential** student learning items, **optional** items and **voluntary** contributions.

Essential Student Learning Items: These are items, activities or services that the College deems **essential** to student learning of the standard curriculum. Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the College or provide their own. These may be items the student takes temporary or permanent possession of or activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend. All families are expected to pay this charge.

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 items the student purchases or hires, activities the student pays to attend or items / materials that are more expensive than the ones required to meet the standard curriculum.

Voluntary Contributions: Parents are invited to make a donation to the College for general or specific purposes, eg: school grounds, building fund or new equipment.

8: PARENT PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

For budgeting and day to day operations the school desires that payment of all school charges be made as promptly as possible. The school recognises that not everyone is in the position to pay up front and will accept payment by regular instalments. Regular instalments can be made by:

- Cash, cheque, credit card or EFTPOS payment at the office at either Campus.
- Cheques made payable to Wonthaggi Secondary College posted to: P.O. Box 119, Wonthaggi, 3995.
- Direct deposit into the College bank account via Centrepay arrangement through Centrelink.
- Direct deposit to the College bank account by direct debit arrangement with your bank or online transfer.

9: FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

The College Principal is responsible for ensuring that parents who are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to provide **essential** or **optional** items for their children are aware of the support options available to assist them. The College will make every effort to ensure eligible families are aware of their entitlement to assistance. These options are:

- **Family Assistance Package:** The College is allocated money to assist parents with a Family Occupational code of "D" or "N". These funds will be allocated to eligible families at the College's discretion. The order of allocation will be: **essential** items first, then **optional** items. **Voluntary** charges are not eligible for payment from this package.
- **C.S.E.F:** Eligible parents will receive \$225 per annum, per student, to go towards Camp, Sport and Excursion costs. Any parent with a valid Health Care or Pension card is eligible to apply for this grant. These funds are allocated at the College's discretion as per the C.S.E.F. Guidelines
- **YR 7 Uniform Package:** Parents of Year 7 students who are eligible for C.S.E.F. are entitled to a basic uniform package.
- **State School Relief Committee (SSR).** The College Principal or their delegate can apply to SSR on behalf of Parent's to assist with the purchase of school books, uniforms, work boots and CAS calculators.
- **Community Welfare** organisations such as St Vincent De Paul, Salvation Army, Anglicare etc....
- **Welfare Grants** allocated to the school from time to time.

The College Principal is to explore ways to make quality second hand books and uniforms available to needy parents.

Parents who experience difficulty making payment to the school for **essential** and **optional** education items are encouraged to discuss alternative payment methods such as regular instalment with the Principal or Business Manager.

10: CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

The College Principal is responsible for notifying the school community of the names and contact details of the staff available to assist them when they are experiencing financial hardship. These personnel are the Student Welfare Co-ordinators at each campus, Campus Principals and Business Manager. These personnel must ensure that victims of hardship:

- are aware of and have accessed all their entitlements such as Family Assistance Package, C.S.E.F.
- are put in touch with appropriate welfare agencies such as: SSR and charity organisations.

Key personnel are to be trained on how to identify clues for people experiencing hardship as many genuine hardship families and students are too embarrassed to come forward.

11: COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The College Principal will ensure that all communication with parents about educational items, including requests for payment, is fair and reasonable. Payment requests, letters or CASES 21 invoices for student materials and service charges must be accompanied by the following information:

- Parents are required to provide **essential** education items for students and that they have the option of purchasing these items from the College or through a supplier of their choice, where appropriate.
- The availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the Principal if the

parent wishes to discuss these.

- Details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the College.

NOTE: All **essential** items and **optional** item charges are itemised on the “College Charges Advice” for each year level. A detailed explanation of all school charges is included on the reverse of the “College Charges Advice”. This form is handed out with the booklist and is available from the office at either campus upon request.

- Advise that a copy of the College Parent Payment Policy is available upon request. The Parent Payment Policy can be accessed via the College website: www.wonthaggisc.vic.edu.gov.au.

Payment requests or letters to parents must clearly identify which payment category the items fall into. The College will issue only one request for **voluntary** financial contributions and one reminder in a school year. The College will issue only one statement detailing **essential item** and **optional item** charges and one reminder per term.

12: MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The School Council will monitor the effectiveness and impact of this policy at least annually as part of the ongoing improvement and report back to the College community.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 6th September 2016.