

# **Caulfield South Primary School**

**C.S.P.S.**

## **Parent Payment Policy**

### **Policy**

This Parent Payments policy outlines the ways in which Caulfield South P.S.'s (C.S.P.S.) school council 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 Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (the Curriculum).
- The C.S.P.S. School Council may request parents make voluntary financial contributions towards the cost of schooling under 2 categories: Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions.
- The C.S.P.S. School Council 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.
- The C.S.P.S. School Council 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.
- C.S.P.S. 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.

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

C.S.P.S. is 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. The C.S.P.S. will also consider the most appropriate arrangements to facilitate student access to required items.

### **Parent payment categories**

The C.S.P.S. School Council 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.

### **Curriculum Contributions**

Curriculum Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum. C.S.P.S. will 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.

### **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**

The C.S.P.S. School Council 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

C.S.P.S. has a commitment and responsibility to be responsive to parents who may be experiencing either short-term or long-term financial hardship.

C.S.P.S. will:

- 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 the Administration staff or Assistant Principal as a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with parent payment arrangements.

*Please ring 9578 3718 or email [caulfield.south.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:caulfield.south.ps@education.vic.gov.au)*

Refer to [Financial Help for Families](#) for further information.

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 Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

### Related policies

- Digital Learning in Schools
- Finance Manual — Financial Management for Schools

- Financial Help for Families
- Personal Devices — Access
- 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

DET Updated 10 August 2021

## **SCHOOL LEVEL INFORMATION**

### **Guidance**

Parent Payment Policy

## Parent Payment Guidelines for Victorian Government Schools

These guidelines outline how schools must implement the Parent Payment Policy. The guidelines are mandatory for Victorian government schools.

### **Principles of voluntary financial contributions**

Schools seeking a parent payment must adhere to the following principles of voluntary financial contributions:

- the school council should clearly explain how contributions will be spent when making a request for a contribution
- each contribution is to be voluntary and obtained without coercion or harassment
- a student at the school is not to be refused instruction in Victorian Curriculum F–10, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (the Curriculum) because their parents do not make a contribution
- a student is not to be approached, coerced or harassed for contributions
- any record of contributions is confidential, as is any decision by a parent not to make a financial contribution.

### **Inclusions and limitations**

#### **Curriculum Contributions**

Curriculum Contributions can only be requested for clearly explained specific purposes that relate to the school's delivery of the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum differently and based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether an item or activity is necessary for delivering the Curriculum.

There are no obligations on parents to make a curriculum contribution and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or disadvantage them in any way if their parents do not contribute.

Schools must use funds raised from Curriculum Contributions only for the purposes for which they were requested.

#### **Other Contributions**

Other Contributions can be requested for a broad area of school need or a clearly explained specific (non-curriculum) purpose that relates to the school's functions and objectives.

There are no obligations on parents to make a contribution and schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or disadvantage them in any way if their parents do not contribute.

Schools must use funds raised from Other Contributions only for the purposes for which they were requested.

#### **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities include non-curriculum-based school events, non-curriculum materials such as school magazines, optional excursions and camps, optional

sporting or music programs and optional items and materials above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum.

**Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must not include:**

- any items, activities and services that are required to fulfil the Curriculum
- general enrolment fees
- subject enrolment fees (including subjects defined by the school as 'elective').

**Alternative forms of instruction**

An alternative form of instruction is the delivery of the Curriculum through non-standard instructional methods, and/or the delivery of a parallel curriculum. Alternative forms of instruction can be included as an Extra-Curricular Activity, provided the school also offers free access to the Curriculum using standard instruction methods.

**Alternative forms of instruction can include:**

- the parallel instruction of the Curriculum using non-standard instruction methods, including the Montessori and Steiner frameworks
- the completion of a senior secondary qualification as an alternative to the VCE or VCAL (for example, the International Baccalaureate Diploma)
- language immersion and binational programs that are offered as an optional stream to the Curriculum.

**Alternative forms of instruction do not include:**

- bilingual programs that deliver the Curriculum to all students in the school
- flexible learning options (for example, school re-engagement programs)
- accelerated learning programs (for example, select entry programs)
- single subjects offered as an alternative to mainstream classes.

**General limitations**

**All parent payments and financial contributions must:**

- support the functions and objectives of the school, including the enhancement of student learning, aspirations and wellbeing
- promote access, equity and inclusion for all students
- be affordable and proportionate to the needs of the school.

All parent payments and financial contributions must not:

- be disproportionate to the needs of the school or unaffordable for most families at the school
- include items that are disproportionate to what the school intends to provide
- include requests for:
  - the provision of gifts, benefits or hospitality to school staff or school council members
  - teacher professional learning
  - items or activities that schools receive full funding for such as electricity, standard internet access and department provided administrative software

- administrative costs such as merchant fees associated with electronic payment transactions, sending text messages or letters to parents
- VET materials fees that have been reimbursed to the school.

### **Educational items for students to own**

Educational items for students to own are items sold by a third party that have a specific curriculum purpose and that students take individual possession of, such as textbooks, calculators, stationery, and digital devices. Schools can invite parents to purchase educational items from third parties (for example, through a booklist).

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.

### **Educational items for students to own must not include:**

- items not directly related to curriculum-based learning
- classroom consumables (including class materials such as food ingredients or art supplies that contribute to finished products that students take home)
- items that students do not take individual possession of (for example, class sets of devices, sports equipment)
- items that are developed and produced by the school (for example, school-developed workbooks, school-developed exam papers)
- activities or services (for example, camps, excursions, events, device repair costs).

### **Finance requirements**

School budgeting and reporting for parent payments and financial contributions must follow the procedures outlined in the [Finance Manual for Victorian Government Schools \(Finance Manual\)](#) and the [Parent Payments Policy](#). These include, but are not limited to:

- school councils must approve, in a timely manner, any request for payments from parents that the school develops
- any contributions and payments must be accurately recorded in CASES21
- receipts must be issued immediately to parents upon payment
- records of payments and contributions must be kept confidential
- schools must not raise invoices or enter voluntary financial contributions (including all Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions) into CASES21 until they have been received
- schools must not request late payment fees, or offer 'pay-on-time discounts', for financial contributions or Extra-Curricular Items and Activities.

## **Outstanding payments**

### **Curriculum and Other Contributions**

Schools cannot consider non-payment of a request for a curriculum contribution or other contribution as an outstanding payment. Parents are not obliged to make a contribution.

Schools can issue personalised reminder notices for Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions no more than once per term. Contribution requests for a new school year should not include unpaid requests carried forward from the previous year.

### **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**

As Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are made available on a user-pays basis, schools do not need to provide students with access to these items or activities if payment is not received for them. Schools cannot refuse students access to instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

If a parent has agreed to purchase an Extra-Curricular Item or Activity, but has not made payment, schools may send invoices or statements only once per term for outstanding amounts, and amounts cannot be carried over to a new year.

Schools cannot deny students access to Extra-Curricular Items and Activities that parents have purchased while following up on other outstanding payments.

Schools cannot deny students access to an Extra-Curricular Item or Activity that has been purchased, regardless of whether parents have made a curriculum or other contribution.

Schools must consider assistance to families experiencing financial hardship on a confidential and case-by-case basis. Schools should also exercise discretion prior to generating reminder notices for unpaid items for families experiencing hardship. Refer to the [Financial Help for Families Policy](#) for further information regarding schools assisting parents experiencing financial hardship.

### **Refunds**

Schools have the discretion to provide refunds to families and should do so where it is reasonable and fair (for example, if the school has not incurred a cost).

If the school has incurred costs, the school should act reasonably and take into consideration the [Financial Help for Families Policy](#) and relevant arrangements, including support for families experiencing hardship. For example, schools should refund families for unavoidable event cancellations if a family experiences a crisis or sudden serious illness and the student can no longer attend the event.

If the school decides to provide a refund, then parents need to agree and advise the school where the refund should be paid. If that agreement cannot be reached, the refund is usually paid into the account from which the money came. Where the payment was made in cash, the school should wait until the parents reach an agreement and advise the school.

## Seeking payment for damage to school property

In most cases, a parent/carer is not legally responsible for damage caused by a student at school. Refer to the [Claims for Property Damage and Medical Expenses Policy](#) for further information on this.

However, schools have the discretion to request that parents voluntarily contribute to the cost of damaged items owned by the school if their child was responsible for the damage.

Schools must continue to facilitate student access to the Curriculum regardless of whether payment for damages are made. Before requesting payment for damaged goods, schools should consider factors including financial hardship and their [Student Engagement Policy](#).

Students and their parents are responsible for returning all items to the school in the same condition they were made available, subject to standard wear and tear.

Standard wear and tear refers to normal deterioration of items from typical everyday use (for example, ripped pages in a textbook, scratches or scuff marks on stationery items). Standard wear and tear can also be agreed upon between the school and parents.

If a student damages school infrastructure or buildings (for example, windows), schools should not request payments for damages, however, schools can invite all parents to make a general or specific (for example, building fund) contribution towards repair.

## Tax deductions

Contributions to schools are only tax deductible if they are:

- donations which have been endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office and have a Deductible Gift Recipients status
- donations to special schools with a Deductible Gift Recipients status.

Refer to the [Finance Manual](#) for further information on this.

## Communication requirements

Schools must follow the following communication requirements when asking parents to make a parent payment or a financial contribution through the school:

- all requests and communications for each year level must be published on the school website for transparency (for example, letter to parents asking for a parent payment, a booklist inviting parents to purchase educational items)
- school websites must include a link to the Department's Parent Payments Policy on the same page as the school's parent payments arrangements – this is also required to demonstrate compliance with the Minimum Standards for school registration
- communications regarding the following year's contributions and payments should begin at least 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year to enable parents to plan and budget accordingly
- all communications must use language that is easy to understand, is culturally appropriate and if required, translated into multiple languages. Schools can use funded [Interpreting and Translation Services](#) for key school communications.

Schools must develop parent payments requests using one of the Department's parent payment arrangement templates:

- [parent payment arrangements template \(primary schools\) \(Word\)](#)

### **Parent contribution contact person**

C.S.P.S. nominates the Assistant Principal and/ or Administrative staff as school contacts for parent payments to respond to parent queries and facilitate Financial Help for Families arrangements on behalf of the school.

They are responsible for working with parents to determine, negotiate and maintain appropriate responses on behalf of the school.

Refer to the [Financial Help for Families Policy](#) for further information.

### **Applying the policy to specific examples**

Administrative software and communication tools

Schools may ask parents to make a voluntary contribution (other contribution) towards the costs associated with third-party software and communication tools. ( such as See Saw, FlexiSchools and Sentral).

Schools cannot request a contribution for Department provided administrative software – for example, CASES21.

### **Classroom equipment and materials**

Schools may request a curriculum contribution towards the cost of purchasing, maintaining or replacing classroom equipment and materials (including class sets of items, sports equipment and any materials used by the teacher to teach).

Schools cannot deny students access to classroom equipment and materials if parents choose not to make a curriculum contribution.

### **Classroom subject consumables**

Many subject areas require the use of consumables for students to receive instruction in the Curriculum, including but not limited to Science (for example, chemicals), Art (for example, paint, coloured paper) and Technology (for example, wood, food ingredients).

C.S.P.S. will ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards these items.

C.S.P.S. may ask parents to pay for some consumables on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Item if the consumable is above and beyond what C.S.P.S. already provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum (for example, students wanting to use mahogany wood and silver for technology in lieu of the school's standard materials of timber and metal). Extra-Curricular Items are clearly specified and itemised.

A student's participation in a subject, including an 'elective', cannot be made conditional on payment of user-pays consumables within that subject and the school will need to ensure that a standard consumable or learning experience is made available for free.

### **Digital and online subscriptions**

C.S.P.S. will request a curriculum contribution towards digital and online subscriptions used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Where digital and online subscriptions enhance the learning experience of students but are not used for their standard classroom learning, C.S.P.S. will invite parents to purchase access to the subscriptions on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Item.

### **Digital devices**

C.S.P.S. will ensure that students have free access to digital devices as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. To ensure students have optimal access, C.S.P.S. implement a 1-to-1 Chrome Book program from Years 4 to 6.

Schools may invite parents to purchase or bring their own digital devices from home instead of using what is made available for free by the school.

When inviting parents to purchase or lease a device through a third-party provider, C.S.P.S. may also invite parents to purchase relevant peripherals (for example, headphones, case), bundled apps or software and device insurance. C.S.P.S. will also recommend minimum technical standards or specify a preferred device.

If a parent is unable to purchase a device or provide their own, then C.S.P.S. will ensure that equitable access to a device is provided.

C.S.P.S. will request a voluntary contribution (curriculum contribution) towards the school's IT facilities and equipment including class sets of digital devices or one-to-one devices that the school owns.

Refer to the [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#) for further information.

### **Excursions**

C.S.P.S. will ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the costs associated with compulsory excursions related to the Curriculum. C.S.P.S. will not disadvantage a student in any way, including via the restriction of attendance or participation in such excursions, if their parents do not contribute.

C.S.P.S. will ask parents to pay for optional excursions that are above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum and are offered as an Extra-Curricular Activity. These are provided on a user-pays basis and can enhance the learning experience of students. Schools must clearly communicate to parents that these are optional. Schools must not refuse instruction in the Curriculum to a student if parents do not purchase an optional excursion.

C.S.P.S. will ask parents to pay for all costs of an optional camp or excursion, including the cost of transport, food, entry fees and accommodation for their child and any teacher(s) attending. Schools can also ask parents to pay for the cost of a casual relief teacher who is engaged for the purpose of supporting the optional camp or excursion. However, schools cannot ask parents to pay for the salaries of Department teaching staff attending the excursion.

C.S.P.S. will keep the cost of optional excursions to a minimum and ensure they are affordable for most parents. C.S.P.S. ensures families experiencing financial hardship access the relevant financial supports so their child can attend by firstly contacting the main office by ringing 9578 3718 or emailing [caulfield.south.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:caulfield.south.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) assists with the costs of camps, sporting activities and excursions and is available for eligible families. C.S.P.S. will communicate to families the availability of the CSEF through the fortnightly school newsletter.

Refer to the [Financial Help for Families Policy](#) for further information.

### **Generic fees or levies**

C.S.P.S. will not ask parents to contribute to generic fees or levies under Curriculum Contributions, for example, Art fee, Year 8 fee, English levy. Items need to be clearly specified and itemised so parents are aware of what they are contributing to.

### **Homework**

When C.S.P.S. sets homework, it will ensure students have free access to the items required to complete the homework.

C.S.P.S. will decide how students have free access to items to complete homework in a way that suits the context of the school. This can include but is not limited to:

- providing students with one-to-one access to items to take home and return to the school once the homework is completed
- sharing access to items between students by making them available to take home on scheduled days.

If C.S.P.S. makes items available for students to take home, schools should communicate to parents that they are responsible for returning all items to the school in the same condition they were provided, subject to standard wear and tear. Refer to Seeking payment for damages to school property above for more information.

### **Safety equipment**

C.S.P.S. must ensure students have free access to any required safety equipment, when needed.

C.S.P.S. may request a contribution (other contribution) towards the cost of purchasing, maintaining or replacing safety equipment.

C.S.P.S. may also invite parents to purchase or supply their own safety equipment instead of using what is made available by the school.

C.S.P.S. is not obliged to provide safety equipment that is considered part of a student's uniform/clothing or is specifically fitted to them (for example, safety boots, closed shoes).

## **Stationery**

C.S.P.S. may invite parents to purchase or provide their own stationery so their student does not need to use what is provided for free by the school.

If a parent chooses not to purchase or provide their own stationery, the school must ensure students have free access to any relevant stationery required for learning in the classroom.

C.S.P.S. may also ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the costs associated with providing class sets of required stationery to students.

C.S.P.S. may request parents pay for some consumables or activities associated with a subject on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Item or Activity. The Extra-Curricular Item or Activity must be above and beyond what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum (for example, payment for attendance at an optional subject-related excursion, or purchase of non-standard classroom materials).

## **Swimming**

As with all aspects of the Curriculum, schools are expected to provide programs that meet the Curriculum within budget provisions. As a result, schools should ensure their free swimming and water safety programs align with curriculum requirements.

Schools may ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the cost of the school's swimming program.

C.S.P.S. will ask parents to pay for swimming lessons or activities that are additional to curriculum requirements on a user-pays basis as an Extra-Curricular Activity. These activities are optional.

Refer to [Swimming in Schools](#) for further information.

## **Textbooks (including digital textbooks) and calculators**

C.S.P.S. may invite parents to purchase or provide their own textbooks and calculators, so their student does not need to use what is provided for free by the school.

If a parent chooses not to purchase or provide their own textbooks or calculators, the school must ensure students have free access to any relevant texts or calculators required for learning in the classroom. C.S.P.S. is not required to provide students with one-to-one access. To ensure adequate resourcing, schools may provide free access to textbooks and calculators using class sets, have them available to borrow from the library or establish a loan or sharing program. Schools can also provide photocopied pages of relevant texts (subject to copyright).

C.S.P.S. may also ask parents to make a curriculum contribution towards the costs associated with providing class sets of required textbooks and calculators.

### **Uniforms**

Schools may request payments for school uniforms. Uniforms are governed by the Student Dress Code Policy. Refer to the [Student Dress Code Policy](#) for further information.