



Purpose

- To ensure Surf Coast Secondary College's parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the Department's policy requirements.
- To ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

Background

Underpinning Surf Coast Secondary College's vision for excellence is a commitment that all students have access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstance, and that no-one is left behind. This enables an approach to educational achievement, engagement and wellbeing which draws on the best evidence and is responsive to local circumstances and need.

Our school works in close partnership with parents/guardians and the broader school community to provide the best educational opportunities and outcomes for students both inside and outside the classroom. Through this partnership, parents/guardians understand that the contribution they make to their children's education, in all its various forms, has an important role in enriching the school's learning and teaching program and improving educational outcomes. The commitment from parents to contribute benefits students and results in improved achievement outcomes, wellbeing and engagement in learning. This is why parent/guardian contribution is highly valued by our school community.

Our school continues to design and develop the learning and teaching programs drawing on the best educational knowledge and practices and strive to offer broad and enriched opportunities to students that are above and beyond what is required in the standard curriculum. Learning and teaching programs may vary to reflect the priorities, decisions and needs and this, in turn, informs the fees set by School Councils.

Surf Coast Secondary College is committed to creating a positive, connected school community and implementing good practices form part of this commitment. With regard to parent payments, this includes consideration of how parent payments are set, clearly communicating how decisions are made and recognising that some families experiencing hardship may need additional consideration and support.

Our school will establish clear expectations and provide supports that promote inclusion and strengthen partnerships with parents/guardians and the school community to continue improving student outcomes, wellbeing and engagement.

Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, administration and facilities required to provide the standard curriculum program. The standard curriculum program includes core learning and teaching activities associated with the eight key learning areas. The standard curriculum for years F-10 means the 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.

The Department allocates funding to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP). This includes funding for the standard curriculum program, including associated administration, equipment, facilities and operational costs. The Act also empowers School Councils to charge parents for items that the school provides or makes available to the student. The items may be categorised as either Essential Student Learning Items or Optional Items. School Councils may also ask parents to make a voluntary financial contribution to the school for a stated purpose.

Policy

School councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payment policy that ensures:

- all students have access to the standard curriculum program
- it covers the three parent payment categories i.e. essential education items, optional extras or voluntary financial contributions
- the school does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories

- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- cost is kept to a minimum
- payment requests must be clearly itemised within each category
- parents/guardians are given the option of purchasing equivalent essential education items themselves, in consultation with the school
- students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions. For example if parents/guardians choose for their children not to attend a compulsory excursion/camp an alternative option needs to be provided.
- the status and details of any payments or non-payments are confidential
- parents are provided with early notice of payment requests (e.g. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year)
- payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used
- it meets the community's expectations and is provided to parents.

Principals, as executive officers of school councils, must ensure that the school-level policy complies with the Department's policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.

Important

- It is not acceptable to use coercion or harass parents/guardians to obtain payment.
- Principals must ensure any payment records are kept confidential. The public identification of students or their parents/guardians who have or have not made a payment or financial contribution is unacceptable and must not occur in any circumstance.
- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by schools to obtain any funds from parents/guardians.

Parent Payment Charges

School Councils can request payments from parents for goods or services which fall in following three categories:

Category	Description
Essential Education Items	<p>These are items which parents/guardians pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate. These items have been deemed essential to support student learning in the standard curriculum program and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items that the individual student takes temporary or permanent possession of, such as text books and student stationery • Materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. food and design technology, art etc) • School uniform (where applicable) • Activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend, such as costs associated with excursions and work placements (e.g. transport and entrance costs). <p>Note: If parents/guardians choose to provide equivalent materials themselves, this must be done in consultation with the school, and items should meet the specifications provided by the school. However, there are some items (e.g. food provisions for food technology) which, due to their nature, can only be provided by the school.</p>
Optional Items	<p>These are items provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students. They are provided on a user pays basis and if parents/guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional support material, resources and administration in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. student computer printing for personal use) • Extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music) • School-based performances, productions and events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (e.g. the use of more expensive materials) • Materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school magazines) • School facilities and equipment not associated with providing the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).
Voluntary Financial Contributions	<p>Parents/guardians, or anyone else, can be invited to make a donation to the school for the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund (these trust funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible) • Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers or student-related services • General voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

Procedure for Establishing School Charges

During Term 3 and 4 of the year prior, the Business Manager and the Principal Team will consult with the relevant Program Leaders on recommended subject specific charges for the following year. There is an expectation that these charges will be itemised and accurately reflect the costs involved.

The Principal Team and Business Manager will prepare an itemised list of charges for consideration for the School Council Resources Sub-Committee who will then make recommendations to School Council regarding proposed charges for the following year.

Charges are to be kept to a minimum and will not exceed the cost of the relevant materials or services used to assist staff to provide an enriched learning and teaching program.

Communication with Families

Families will be provided with a copy of their College account no more than once per month unless otherwise requested by the parent/guardian.

The College will ensure that all requests for payment are fair and reasonable.

Requests, letters and invoices / statements for student materials and services will be accompanied by the following information:

- A description of each of the three parent payment categories
- Details of what parents/guardians are being asked to pay for
- Where appropriate that parents are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier
- The availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to contact the College's Business Manager if the parent/guardian wishes to discuss these

A copy of the School Council endorsed Parent Payments Policy is to be available on the College's website and hard copies will be made available to any family upon request

Parents/guardians may contact the College's Finance Team via phone, in person or by email at accounts@scsc.vic.edu.au to make general inquiries about the charges on their accounts. Any complaints can be addressed to the Finance Team and if needed will be referred to the Principal.

Privacy

The status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents/guardians or students are to be kept strictly confidential and only communicated to those who qualify under 'need to know'

guidelines. School Council will be updated on collections by the presentation of a percentage received only.

Under no circumstances should staff read out the names of students who have not paid their general charges, subject material charges or activity charges.

Payment Arrangements

Payments can be made directly to the Administration office using cash, cheque or EFTPOS. All payments over \$5 will be issued a receipt. Receipts for transactions under \$5 will be issued upon request.

Families will also have the option of making payments using BPay facilities, direct credit and Centrepay. Families paying by BPay are asked to ensure they enter their family ID code along with a detailed reference of the charge being paid. The College will also ask families to forward the remittance advice from their family statement with the charges being paid clearly marked.

Qualifying families have the opportunity to make payments by accessing Centrepay deductions through Centrelink. Centrepay is a direct bill paying service offered to customers receiving payments from Centrelink. Through Centrepay, families can choose to pay their school charges by having a regular amount deducted from their Centrelink payments. Centrepay is completely voluntary.

Consideration of Hardship

The College will provide opportunities for all families experiencing financial difficulties to enter into alternative and confidential payment plans through contact with the Principal, Business Manager or Finance Manager. The Finance Team can be contacted on 03 5261 6633 or in person during school hours or via email at accounts@scsc.vic.gov.au.

Family support options may include:

- Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) for eligible families
- State Schools Relief (for support with uniform items for eligible families)
- Other local community supports

Principles

The College will not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level if students have not paid their fees. Students will not be denied access to the standard curriculum program or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education items.

Where a parent/guardian pays for a specific item / service the College may not use the funds for any other purpose without the consent of the payee. Items made by students during subjects for which the parents have paid, become the property of the student unless negotiated with the College.

Any devices ordered and purchased through the College will remain the property of the College until paid in full by the parent / guardian. As such, the College has the right to retain the device at the College on weeknights, weekends and during school holiday periods. In this circumstance the student will use the device whilst at school until payments or arrangements to pay have been made in accordance with the required payment schedule. Where this is applicable, there is to be no impact on the student's learning. Once the required payments; or arrangements to pay have been made, the device will again be available for the student to use at home.

No collectors of any type, including debt collectors, will be used to obtain funds from parents or students.

Evaluation

The evaluation will include:

- Assessment in relation to DET compliance requirements

- School data on percentage of general essential charges paid across the whole school and for each year level
- School data on percentage of students paying for and attending scheduled camps and excursions
- Revenue and expenditure reports for school sub programs

This policy will be updated every three years or more frequently if there are changes in Departmental directives.

Evaluation Due: 2019

Ratified by School Council: 15.05.2018