

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 contribution, in all forms, assists schools to provide an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by school communities.

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.

Aims:

- To provide high quality learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing limited Government funding with approved financial contributions and payments from parents and guardians.
- To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent and transparent.
- To ensure that all students have access to the standard curriculum.

Implementation:

1. In implementing this policy, Lowanna College will adhere to the following principles:
 - a. Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when schools determine their parent payments practices.
 - b. Access, equity and inclusion:** All students have access to the standard curriculum program and participation of all students to the full school program is facilitated. No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.
 - c. Affordability:** Cost to parents and guardians is kept to a minimum and is affordable for most families at the school.
 - d. Engagement and Support:** Early identification and engagement strategies by the school ensure parents and guardians are well informed of the payment options and supports available for those experiencing hardship.
 - e. Respect and Confidentiality:** Parents, guardians and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgment and the identity and personal information of all parents, guardians and students are kept confidential in respect to parent payments.
 - f. Transparency and Accountability:** School parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by School Council.

2. The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) 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 or guardians under the three following categories only:
 - a. Essential Student Learning Items are those items, activities or services that are essential to support student learning of the standard curriculum. These are also items or activities that the school deems compulsory. The Lowanna College Council asks that all Essential Student Learning Items are paid for by parents and guardians. These items include:
 - i. materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery;
 - ii. materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g.) food technology, photography, handbooks;
 - iii. 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 and enhanced activities in subjects;
 - iv. transport and entrance fees for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend. If parents and guardians choose for their child to not attend a compulsory camp or excursion, an alternative option will be provided.
 - b. 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 should parents or guardians choose to access them for students, they are required to pay for them. These items include:
 - i. student document printing for personal use;
 - ii. extra-curricular programs or activities (e.g.) VET, Outdoor Education, instrumental music, Debutante Ball;
 - iii. school-based performances, productions and events; and
 - iv. student photos
 - c. Voluntary Financial Contributions are those where parents or guardians are invited by Lowanna College School Council to make a donation to the school for a general or specific purpose, (e.g.) school grounds projects, library fund or new equipment. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible.
3. The attached Department of Education and Training (DET) diagram 'Understanding Parent Payment Categories' provides examples of items and materials under each of the above categories.
4. Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Financial Contributions (a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year).
5. All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.
6. Lowanna College will provide opportunities for parents and guardians experiencing financial difficulties to enter into alternative and confidential payment arrangements, including instalments, Centrepay (for those who are in receipt of Centrelink benefits), bpay or direct debit.
7. Invoices will be mailed home at the beginning of Term 1. Statements or SMS reminders, detailing items that are outstanding and due for payment, will be sent once a week.
8. Where Essential Student Learning Items payments remain unpaid, the College reserves the right to ensure students will not be able to take possession of the item until it has been paid for.

9. Payment for excursions, camps and co-curricular activities must be made prior to participation in the activity/ event and in accordance with the published timeline (please refer to the 'Camps and Excursions' policy).
10. Outstanding student fees for Optional Items may compromise a student's eligibility to be involved in future optional activities.
11. Additional support options available to parents and guardians include:
 - a. Camps, Sport and Excursion Fund (CSEF) - The CSEF was initiated by the Victorian Government to assist families who hold a valid means-tested concession card. Eligibility for this funding may also extend to a temporary foster parent. The annual CSEF amount for eligible Secondary School students is \$225, with parents and guardians required to submit a new CSEF application form each year. Please note that in 2017, Year 7 students in Victorian Government schools who are CSEF recipients are also automatically eligible for uniform purchase support through State Schools' Relief. Lowanna College General Office staff will be able to provide further information to parents or guardians regarding applications for these types of funding support.
 - b. Second-hand items available through the Lowanna College Secondhand Books and Uniform Facebook Group.
 - c. Local community organisations, such as the Salvation Army and Opportunity Shops.
 - d. State Schools Relief - via our Wellbeing Team.

Evaluation:

The Lowanna College School Council will review the level and purpose of parent payments and voluntary contributions annually and in doing so, our policy will be consistent with any advice or instruction received from the DET.

This policy was last ratified by College Council on 17 September 2018.

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