



PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

Rationale

The Education & Training Reform Act 2006 empowers school councils to charge parents for goods and services used in the course of instruction of their children, as well as to raise funds. Our School Council requests payment from parents for student materials and services charges, and for modest voluntary financial contributions as this enhances the quality and variety of educational programs offered by our school. As a school, we spend a considerable amount of time to ensure that the most appropriate items and services are selected to meet the needs of our students.

Purpose

To ensure that Springside Primary School provides high quality learning opportunities for all students, by supplementing limited government funds with approved financial contributions from parents in a consistent and transparent manner.

Implementation

School Council supplements Department of Education and Training funds by requesting payments from parents for the following items:-

1. *Essential Items*

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. Examples include stationary booklists, textbooks, excursions, school sports etc.

See below for 2021 Excursion, Incursion and Sporting Levies and what it encompasses:



Year Prep	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
\$51	\$65	\$53	\$85	\$64	\$35	\$94

2. *Optional Items*

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. Examples include school magazine, religious education, instrumental music tuition or instrument hire etc.

3. *Voluntary Financial Contributions*

Parents are invited to make a donation to the school for general or specific purposes, e.g. school grounds projects, building fund or for new equipment. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible.

Requesting payments

When requesting payments from parents, the following will be implemented:

- All communication with parents concerning Essential items and Optional Items (including requests for payment) will be fair and reasonable. The school will accurately cost and develop a list of payments requested from parents for students at each year level ensuring payment options are available, easily accessible and easily understood to all parents.
- Parents will be made aware of the costs associated with student booklist, textbooks and voluntary contributions in the November of the previous year. The payments schedule will include itemised details relating to **Essential**, **Optional** or **Voluntary** Items, with an option to purchase goods elsewhere (where appropriate).
- All requests for payment will be made via letter, Cases21 (Department of Education school software program) or Compass (Parent Portal).
- All payments received will be receipted promptly through Cases21.
- As with all parent payments to the school, Council will provide opportunities for all parents experiencing financial difficulties to enter into alternative and confidential payment arrangements with the principal.
- Unpaid **Essential Items** payments will not result in any detriment by the school to the student or family. Unpaid **Optional Extras** payments may compromise a student's ability to be involved in the optional activity in the future. Unpaid **Voluntary Financial Contributions** do not constitute a non-payment and will not result in any detriment by the school to the student or family.
- All payments and non-payments will be strictly confidential. The public identification of students or their parents where payments have or have not been received will not occur.
- No collectors of any type, including debt collectors, will be used to obtain funds from parents or students.
- Parents who make voluntary contributions will receive letters of appreciation.
- The principal will ensure that all staff are aware of this policy and adhere to it.

Payment options

The following parent payment options will be made available:

- Compass (Parent Portal)
- Credit card (in person, over the phone or by other arrangement)
- Cash, cheque or EFTPOS (via a student through the classroom Cash Book or in person (parent or student) at the General Office)

Refunds

- Refunds are available when a medical certificate is presented for a student who was unable to attend an event due to illness. This refund will include fees for entry to an event but excludes any travelling costs that have been committed, except in the event of a camp where the parents have agreed to a non-refundable deposit only accommodation and food costs are refundable.
- Refunds will be credited to the family financial account and any balance will be reimbursed by cheque once the student leaves the school.

Families experiencing hardship

Hardship refers to an inability to pay due to financial difficulty or circumstance. Hardship can arise from a variety of situations that can be either short or long term. Hardship is not necessarily related to the income of the family but can result from contributing stressors which can impact a family's ability to make financial payments. Hardship can be experienced as a result of a sudden change in circumstances, which leads to temporary financial difficulty; as a result of a low and/or fixed income which leads to ongoing financial difficulty; or from a combination of low income and an unanticipated change in circumstances. While some families may require flexibility and temporary assistance, such as an extension of time to pay or flexible payment arrangements, other

families may not expect their situation to improve in the foreseeable future and will instead require ongoing support over a longer period.

To support families experiencing hardship, the following will be implemented:

- Parents experiencing financial difficulty, who wish for their children to attend an excursion, are invited to discuss alternative arrangements with the Principal. The Principal, on an individual basis, will make decisions relating to alternative payment arrangements.
- The school's hardship arrangements include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty and may include, but not limited to:
 - Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) - *provides payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply and a Special Consideration eligibility category also exists;*
 - State Schools' Relief - *may cover the cost of new school uniforms, shoes, books and more for disadvantaged students. State Schools' Relief only responds to requests from school principals, assistant principals or welfare coordinators. Parents or Carers who are struggling need to make an appointment with the school to discuss their situation;*
 - Payment Plans;
 - Reduced or subsidised fees;
 - Waiving of fees;
 - Agency funding sought where available;
 - Altering the timelines of requested parent payment.
- Consideration is provided to families experiencing long-term hardship or short-term crisis on a confidential, case-by-case basis. We encourage parents experiencing financial stress, to contact the Business Manager, to establish a payment plan and make payments on a regular basis. Confidential arrangements can be made by calling the school office to speak with the Business Manager on 94496400.

Evaluation

- This policy was ratified by School Council in **February 2021**.
- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle, scheduled for **February 2021**.