



## Parent Payment Policy

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School councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories – essential education items, optional education items and voluntary financial contributions.

Westgrove Primary School has spent considerable time selecting the most appropriate requisites to meet the needs of our children. The book packs contain high quality materials at a competitive price due to our ability to bulk order.

Parents and guardians also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications provided by the school. There may also be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.

No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

### Parent Payment Categories

**Essential education items** are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents and guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide.

These items include:

- materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery;
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. construction material, speciality paper);
- class sets of library books, dictionaries, thesaurus, Atlases etc.
- additional technology resources (Interactive whiteboards, computer hardware & visual equipment);

**Optional education items** (or non-essential materials and services) are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and which are offered to all students. These optional extras are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents and guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them.

These items include:

- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, swimming program;
- camps, excursions, incursions & sports activities
- school-based performances, productions and events; and
- class photographs.

**Voluntary financial contributions** are for those items and service that parent and guardians are **invited** to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, a library or building trust.

### Other support options

The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist parents, including the School Start Bonus, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and State Schools Relief Committee support.

## *Education Maintenance Allowance*

A parent or guardian of a child under 16 years of age who holds a valid Health Care Card, Pension Card, may be entitled to the Education Maintenance Allowance (The allowance for 2012 is \$235 per annum for a primary student). The annual allowance amount is split evenly between the parents and the school.

Parents have the option of providing essential education items themselves or can authorise the school to direct the school's portion of the family's EMA towards particular items.

The school's portion of the EMA will be put towards the cost of essential education items or curriculum related optional extras.

Parents are entitled to know how the EMA is being used for their child's education. The school will provide parents and guardians of the itemised cost of student materials and services on which they may choose to spend the EMA.

The school's portion of the EMA will not be used to offset voluntary financial contributions.

Any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of the year will be carried over into the next year unless parent/guardian requests the non expended amount to be returned to them.

### **Payment arrangements**

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (a minimum of six weeks notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

Payments are kept to a minimum with payment requests and letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

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| Option A | Full amount by end Term 1                      |
| Option B | Payment using EMA School and/or Parent Portion |
| Option D | Other, payment arrangements                    |

Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

Payment requests or letters to parents will be accompanied with a Statement clearly identifying essential education items, optional education items or voluntary financial contribution.

Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.

Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items will be generated and distributed as required to parents/guardians, but not more than once a month.

Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued to parents and guardians.

All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.