**Parent Payments Policy – School communication to families**

**General statement**

* The Department of Education and Training has sought to clarify the Parent Payments Policy for 2022 to remove any ambiguity relating to parents’ financial contributions to schools.
* Changes to how schools request contributions have been made accordingly.

**Why are parent payment arrangements different now?**

* The Department of Education and Training reviewed parent contribution practices across a significant number of schools last year and found some inconsistency in the way contributions were being requested and managed.
* In recognition of this, the Department has now made changes to how schools seek contributions to align practices across the system and ensure consistency. The intent is to ensure parents and schools use common terminology and have a shared understanding around parent payment arrangements.

**What is specifically different?**

Parent Payment Categories

* The categories under which contributions will be requested have been changed to align with the purpose of the payment:
  + **Curriculum Contributions** (previously known as Essential Student Learning Items) support items and activities that help deliver fundamental curriculum or subject learning e.g. General classroom materials and equipment
  + **Other Contributions** (previously known as Voluntary Contributions) support the school’s operation and function more generally e.g. Parent communication tools and school building enhancements
  + Payments for **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities** (previously known as Optional Items) provide for items and activities over and above what is needed to deliver fundamental curriculum learning. These *user-pays* contributions enhance the schooling experience for students e.g. Optional camps, excursions and events

A new template for communicating arrangements

* A new template is being used by all schools to communicate parent payment arrangements. The template includes the new category names to clearly define the purpose of parent payment requests and includes a one-page overview of the policy.

New payment procedures

* Internal invoicing and receipt practices have also changed in relation to the way contributions are processed. Schools will no longer send out invoices and statements for **Curriculum** and **Other** Contributions.
* Parents simply view contribution requests at the beginning of the year, then make their contributions using the payment methods provided. Parents may wish to use BPay, EFT or cash to manage the payment process.
* Receipts must be issued to families for the contributions that they make directly to the school office. Relevant receipts will be issued for tax deductible donations in compliance with ATO regulations.
* Invoices and statements may be received by parents for **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**. These are often confirmed throughout the year for camps, excursions, special events and other activities or items.

**Communicating the voluntary nature and importance of contributions**

* **Curriculum** and **Other** contributions are voluntary.
* We continue to value your contributions in supporting our school’s programs and resources.
* Your contributions continue to assist us to broaden the educational experience for our students. It has allowed us to provide enhanced digital learning opportunities, playground upgrades and essential resources for teaching and learning. Without your contributions, many of these things may not be possible.
* If you are unable or choose not to make financial contributions, your child will not be disadvantaged or denied access to the resources required to deliver the curriculum. We will always provide students with free instruction to fulfil the standard Victorian curriculum.
* For **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**, it is up to you whether you wish for your child to have the item/participate in the activity.
* These are optional and provided on a user-pays basis, and so the school will require a parent payment to provide them to individual students.
* Our school only requests contributions for items that we believe add value to the school experience for students.
* The contributions go specifically towards items and activities that help improve your child’s educational experience.