

Heatherwood School No 4871

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

Heatherwood School is committed to providing the best possible educational opportunities and outcomes for all its students.

Parent contributions make it possible for the school to initially maintain and then further develop its high standard of education in quality facilities.

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 grants School Councils the power to charge fees for goods and services to support the delivery of free instruction and to raise funds.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) have issued a Parent Payments in Victorian government schools policy which includes descriptions of what constitutes free education and which items schools are able to request parent contributions.

Rationale:

- To provide a clear set of guidelines for the establishment and collection of Annual School Charges, as paid by parents/carers/independent students, within Government and Department of Education and Training Policy Guidelines.
- To enable the School to operate in a financially viable and planned way within the framework of the Student Resource Package and the Education Reform Act 2006

Aims:

- For School Council to set reasonable annual Parent Payments consistent with:
 - the provision of a standard curriculum across Years 7-12 for the subsequent year and
 - The School Strategic Plan.
- To provide adequate information and to consult and communicate with parents/carers and independent students regarding the purpose, context and schedule of School Charges to ensure their financial support for Heatherwood School.
- To develop an approach to setting and collecting School Charges that operates within Government/DET Policy and Guidelines and maximises payment for charges, especially where parents are requested to make a payment.
- To collect the set charges applicable to all students within a defined time frame.
- To be sympathetic and understanding of the differing circumstances of individual students and families.
- To ensure access by all students to the standard educational program of the School. That no student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

- To ensure that a pro-rata repayment of charges applies where an enrolment ceases prior to completion of the academic year.

Implementation:

- Working to an agreed timeframe and after consultation and consideration of submissions from the School's Coordinators, the School Council will approve a curriculum plan for the subsequent year. Through working with the Finance Committee the School Council will recommend a schedule School Charges which include Resources, Curriculum and other identified components.
- Before the commencement of each year, the School Council through the Finance Committee and School Administration will clearly communicate in writing to parents/carers/independent students the purpose, context and schedule of the academic year's School Charges. These changes are endorsed by the School Council which incorporate arrangements for expected payment.
- The School Charges consist of:
 1. Essential education items.
 2. Optional education items.
 3. Voluntary financial contributions.

This distinction is consistent with Government Policy.

1. **Essential education items** *are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents or guardians are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if appropriate.*

These charges cover:

- Subject Materials Charges that are essential to support the implementation of the standard curriculum.
- Materials for a wide range of co-curricular activities.
- School supplied text books, stationary, lockers, diaries, ID cards etc.
- Goods and services (identified with the Charges schedule) that parents would normally be expected to provide and are provided by the School on behalf of parents.
- Heatherwood School buses for community access to support and generalise learning.
- Homecrafts

2. **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 charges cover:

- Some costs incurred through the provision of additional goods and services associated with providing the standard curriculum.
- Camps, Excursions & Incursions.
- Friday Recreation.

- Access to sporting activities such as swimming.
- School Magazine.
- School Photos.

3. Voluntary financial contributions *are for those items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school.*

Heatherwood School is a Deductible Gift Recipient that can receive tax deductible gifts.

Payment Schedules

The School requests payment of the Essential items levy by the end of February each year.

The School will request payment of practical and selected activity charges for the following Term by the last Friday in the previous Term to ensure that the course/activity can be offered and is financially viable.

Where such payment is not (fully) made, a payment schedule for the following term must be agreed to with the School prior to commencement of the relevant school term.

In regard to Optional educational charges, the School Council reserves the right to issue such communications as are considered appropriate and consistent with policy and guidelines. This includes requests to cover costs of planned excursions and camps.

(See Excursion & Camp Policies: All Excursions and Camps should be fully costed and not operate at a loss. This will include consideration of replacement teacher arrangements and costs.)

Financial arrangements are to be discussed with the Principal and the Business Manager once Parents/carers/independent students have been notified of the excursion/camp.

Where parents are unable or unwilling to meet the above commitment, the standard Educational Program is made available to students consistent with DET Policy.

- All communication with parents and/or staff will ensure the individual's circumstances are taken into account and every effort made to allow payment of charges over the academic year. Such arrangements will be determined by the Principal or Principal's representative (Business Manager).
- The following procedures will apply to requests in writing for refund of School Charges:
- Where an enrolment ceases beyond the first month of Term 1, refunds will be paid for the remaining whole term(s),
 - e.g. - if student ceases early March - refunds for Terms 2, 3, 4 are applicable
 - if student ceases May/June - refunds for Terms 3, 4 are applicable

Some Family support options

- Camps, Sport and Excursions Fund (CSEF)

- Year 7 Uniform Pack
- State School Relief
- Centrepay

(More information can be provided by contacting the Business Manager, Kaye Shilcock at Heatherwood School)

4. Consideration of Hardship

- 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 families' ability to make financial payments.
- Hardship can be experienced as a result of a sudden change in circumstances which lead to temporary financial difficulty: as a result of a low and/or fixed income which lead to ongoing financial difficulty; or from a combination of low income and 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.

Parents experiencing hardship will be offered support through the school with a range of strategies and sources of information as previously identified.

Resources:

- School Council will provide the human and physical resources necessary to implement the above in the context of the Student Resource Package or its successor.
- School Council, working particularly through its Finance Committee and School Administration, will ensure all relevant DET Policy and Guidelines are considered to ensure currency of this Policy.

Evaluation:

The School Parent Payment Policy to be reviewed annually and endorsed by School Council.

26th October 2016

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....