



# PARENT PAYMENTS

## POLICY

### **Rationale:**

The *Education and Training Reform Act, 2006* (“the Act”) 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. As the quality and variety of education programs offered by Karingal Primary School are enhanced by doing so, School Council requests payment from parents for certain student materials and services charged, and for modest voluntary financial contributions.

### **Aims:**

To provide high quality learning opportunities for all students by supplementing limited government funds with approved financial contributions and payments from parents.

### **Implementation:**

School Council is responsible for developing and approving Karingal Primary School’s Parent Payments Policy to ensure that:

- all students have access to the standard curriculum program, as defined by Section 2.2.4 of the Act
- Karingal Primary School does not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment in accordance with the *Financial Services Reform Act, 2001*
- cost is kept to a minimum
- payment requests are clearly itemised
- parents/guardians are given the option of purchasing equivalent essential education items themselves, in consultation with the school. However, there are some items, e.g. art supplies, which due to their nature can only be provided by the school
- students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made, in accordance with the *Financial Services Reform Act, 2001*
- the status and details of any payments or non-payments are confidential
- parents are provided with early notice of payment requests
- payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used

The Principal must ensure that the Parent Payments Policy complies with the Department’s policy and that all staff are familiar with and adhere to it.

Payments may be requested from parents/guardians for the following items/categories:

**Essential Education Items** These are items which parents/guardians pay the school to provide. These items are essential to support instruction in the standard curriculum program, including but not limited to materials that the individual student takes possession of, such as text books and stationery, finished articles of work, school uniform (where applicable).

**Optional Extras** These are items provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and are offered to all students. They are provided on a user pays basis; optional extras are dependent on parent/guardian contribution. These items include, but are not limited to: instructional support material, resources and administration; extra-curricular programs or activities offered for example, instrumental music, instruction in the Montessori Stream, Religious Education; school-based performances, productions and events; school magazines, camps, excursions.

**Voluntary financial contributions** Parents/guardians, or anyone else, can be invited to make a donation to the school for specific purposes identified by the school, including but not limited to a building or library trust fund; or, a general voluntary financial contribution or donation.

School Council will review the Essential Education Items and Optional Extras annually taking into consideration any advice or instruction received from the Department of Education on these matters.

Note: Parents/guardians of children starting part way into a year will be requested to pay for any applicable Essential Education Items and Optional Extras pro rata according to the number of weeks remaining in that year.

### **Communication with parents:**

Communications with parents/guardians, including payment requests, must be fair and reasonable and include: details of what parents/guardians are being asked to pay for, and under which parent payment category; the availability of alternative payment options; and a copy of this Parent Payments Policy.

### **Administrative and payment processes:**

Karingal Primary School will ensure that administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements. Invoices for unpaid Essential Education Items or Optional Items accepted by parents are generated and distributed on a regular basis, but not more than once a month. Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice per year are sent to all parents/guardians. Receipts will be sent to parents/guardians as soon as reasonably practicable upon payment.

### **Support Options:**

There are a range of support options available for parents experiencing difficulty in paying for Essential Education Items including:

- Government assistance
- access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the Principal to assist with clothing/uniforms
- welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools to provide further assistance to students and their families.

Parents/guardians who experience difficulties are encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal or other nominated senior staff member to discuss and negotiate an appropriate alternative arrangement, such as payment by instalments.

The Principal must exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families, and will make decisions about how to manage non-payment of Essential Education Items or Optional Extras on a case-by-case basis

### **Non-Payment:**

It is clear from the power set out under Part 2.3 of the Act available to school councils that a fee that falls within Essential Education Items remains unpaid by parents may not be pursued as a debt. In the event of non-payment of requests (for invoices) in relation to Optional Extras that parents/guardians have requested for their children, and in the absence of satisfactory arrangements being made as described in Support Options, School Council is authorised to pursue parents/guardians for non-payment of that/those debts.

### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of Karingal Primary School's annual review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015.