

2024 Parent Payment Policy

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1 Purpose

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the Standard Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum) and families understand the financial rules around entry into and continued participation in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs at Caulfield Junior College.

2 Background and Rationale

The Victorian community shares a vision to build an education system that champions excellence and ensures that every child and young person has access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Schools are best placed to make local decisions which ensure that all students can access a broad range of learning opportunities that support their expectations and promote their aspirations as they move through the education system. Parent contribution, in all forms, assists schools to provide an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by school communities. Learning and teaching programs vary across schools based on local needs and circumstances and reflect each school's priorities, decisions and resources. This, in turn, informs the parent payment charges approved by School Councils that may vary from one school to the next.

What can schools charge for?

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for instruction in the standard curriculum program to be free to all students in government schools. School Councils are responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents¹ under three categories only: Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Financial Contributions.

Essential Student Learning Items are those 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.

Optional Items are those 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. *The French Binational / French Enrichment Programs at Caulfield Junior College is considered an Optional Item Above the Standard Curriculum – see point 8 for further information.*

Voluntary Financial Contributions are where parents can be invited to make a donation to the school for a general or specific purpose, e.g. school grounds projects, library fund or for new equipment. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible.

¹ Parent' in the policy has the same meaning as in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, which is: 'parent', in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

The attached diagram (Appendix 3.0) "*Understanding Parent Payment Categories*" provides examples of items and materials under each category, including those Voluntary Financial Contributions that are tax-deductible. A statement for those items can be produced on request to the Business Manager.

In implementing this policy, schools must adhere to the following principles:

3 Principles

- **Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when schools determine their parent payments practices.
- **Access, equity and inclusion:** All students have access to the standard curriculum program and participation of all students to the full school program is facilitated.
- **Affordability:** Cost to parents is kept to a minimum and is affordable for most families at the school
- **Engagement and Support:** Early identification and engagement strategies by the school ensure parents are well informed of the payment options and supports available for those experiencing hardship.
- **Respect and Confidentiality:** Parents and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement. In addition, the identity and personal information of all parents and students are kept confidential in respect to parent payments.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** School parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by School Councils

4 Cost and support to parents

When School Councils consider the proposed requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school.

School Principals must ensure that:

- items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed.
- payment requests are broadly itemised within the appropriate category.
- parents are advised that they have the option of purchasing equivalent Essential Student Learning Items themselves, in consultation with the school.
- information on payment options is available, accessible and easily understood to all parents so that they know what to expect and what supports they can access.
- parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year). This enables parents to save and budget accordingly.
- parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year- ensuring parents have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought.

- the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel.
- parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next
- use of debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents is not permitted.
- there will be only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year.
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential or optional items accepted by parents are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the school.

4.1 Support for families

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. School Principals and School Councils exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees. There are a range of support options available to support and assist parents. These can be accessed through “*Cost support for families.*”

Consideration to hardship arrangements in respect to payment requests is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short term crisis on a confidential, case by case basis. All schools have written hardship arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty.

All parents are provided the name and contact details of a nominated parent payment contact person at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

5 Engaging with parents

In respect to each school’s development of its parent payments, School Councils will engage in effective communication with the school community and have strategies in place to ensure they are aware of and understand the needs and views of parents.

6 Implementation of Payment Policy

Caulfield Junior College’s parent payment practices are informed by and compliant with the Department’s Parent Payment Policy. The Principal has the ultimate decision making and discretionary power in relation to the application and implementation of this policy on a case by case basis.

The tables and subsequent information (including appendices) below outline how payments are invoiced.

All families, including those in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs (which is considered above the Standard Curriculum) are asked to contribute towards the Caulfield Junior College Curriculum Contributions Payments (the ‘Curriculum Contributions’) as outlined in Appendix 1.0.

7 Guidelines for Parent Payment of Curriculum Contributions for the Standard Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum)

7.1 Prior Notice of Invoice

Parents must be provided with notice of annual payment requests a minimum six weeks before the end of the previous school year.

7.2 Payment of Curriculum Contributions

It is the schools' preference that Curriculum Contributions payment is made upfront, however payments can also be made in four (4) monthly instalments, per the below table:

Table 1: Payment Schedule for Curriculum Contributions

		Due Date
Option 1: Upfront Payment (Compass or EFTPOS at front office)		29th January 2024
Option 2: 4 Installments (Compass Payment Plan)	Instalment 1 - 25% of Total	29th January 2024
	Instalment 2 - 25% of Total	29th February 2024
	Instalment 3 - 25% of Total	29th March 2024
	Instalment 4 - 25% of Total	29th April 2024

7.3 Family Support Options

7.3.1 Discretion and Decision Making

The Principal has the ultimate decision making and discretionary power in relation to the application and implementation of this policy on a case by case basis.

7.3.2 CSEF

Families may be eligible for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF). See the Business Manager for further details.

7.3.3 State Schools' Relief

Families may be able to access support from the State Schools' Relief, an autonomous, charitable organisation that assists students experiencing short term crises and long term chronic needs attending government schools in Victoria with school clothing, footwear, textbooks and other essential items. Schools can apply to State Schools' Relief for this support. See the Business Manager for further details.

Items, such as school uniform, can be purchased second-hand through the Caulfield Junior College Parents Committee.

Families in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs can also apply for assistance through the Bourse Scolaire. See the French Director for further details.

7.4 Hardship

To apply for Hardship consideration, an appointment will need to be made with the Business Manager. In consultation with the School Principal, the Business Manager can arrange for a payment plan to be written.

Hardship cannot be considered for families enrolled in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs as it is considered above the Standard Curriculum.

See Appendix 2.0 Supporting *Families Experiencing Hardship* for further information.

8 Guidelines for Payment of Parent Levy for the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs (Extra-curricular Items and Activities)

In addition to the contribution towards the Caulfield Junior College Curriculum Contributions (as outlined in Appendix 1.0), students can be enrolled (per the Enrolment Policy) in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs (which is considered an Extra-curricular Items and Activity above the standard curriculum).

The French Binational / French Enrichment Programs is funded through the Student Resource Package and is supplemented by the Parent Levy. The Parent Levy is set and reviewed by the School Council each year.

For the purpose of this policy a term is defined as a Victorian Public School term as notified by the Department of Education and Training website for the applicable year.

8.1 Entry into French Binational / French Enrichment Programs

Entry into and / or continued participation in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs is contingent on paying the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs Parent Levy within the timeframes specified at the time of offer. Entry into the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs cannot be granted if these payments are not made.

Students entering the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs during the year will be charged on a pro-rata basis from the beginning of the term of entry.

8.2 Discretion and Decision Making

The Principal has the ultimate decision making and discretionary power in relation to the application and implementation of this policy on a case by case basis.

8.3 Payment

It is School Council's preference that payment of the Parent Levy for the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs (Optional Item Above Standard Curriculum) is made upfront for all students, however alternative payment options are available as outlined below:

Table 2: Payment Schedule for the French Binational Program

	Amount (%)	Due Date
Option 1: Upfront Payments	100% of Total Payments	29th January 2024
Option 2 – 6 Monthly Payments	20%	29th January 2024
	16%	29th February 2024
	16%	29th March 2024
	16%	29th April 2024
	16%	29 th May 2024
	16%	29 th June 2024

Table 3: Payment Schedule for the French Enrichment

	Amount (%)	Due Date
Option 1: Upfront Payments	100% of Total Payments	29th January 2024
Option 2 – 5 Monthly Payments	20%	29th January 2024
	20%	29th February 2024
	20%	29th March 2024
	20%	29th April 2024
	20%	29 th May 2024

8.4 Non-Payment of French Binational / French Enrichment Programs Parent Levy

Students may not enter / remain in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs at the start of a new term if payments from any term prior (including the months within that term, if paying per month) are not paid by the due date.

If, after a payment reminder has been issued by the school and the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs Parent Levy remains unpaid, the student will no longer be part of the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs at the start of the next term. As a result, the student will be offered a place in the Standard Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum), subject to spaces being available (for students living outside of the school zone) in the applicable year level. Please note: students living outside of the CJC school zone are automatically zoned to their local government primary school.

8.5 Permanent Withdrawal from the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs

8.5.1 Notice for Permanent Withdrawal

One (1) full terms notice in writing to the School Principal is required advising of the permanent withdrawal of a student from the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs. If a full terms notice has not been given, then a charge equivalent to one (1) term will be applicable. Where the Parent Levy has been paid in advance (i.e. Upfront or by Instalment) and all aspects of this Payment Policy has been adhered to (including one (1) full term's notice), the Principal **may** authorize a refund of the Parent Levy as follows:

Term of Withdrawal	Term/s Refund
Term 1	Term 2, 3 and 4
Term 2	Term 3 and 4
Term 3	Term 4
Term 4	No refund

Once a student has commenced a term in the FBP, the term must be paid for.

8.5.2 Re-enrolment after Permanent Withdrawal

If a student is permanently withdrawn for any reason whatsoever, a place in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs will not be reserved for that student.

Re-enrolment in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs is not guaranteed in the case of permanent withdrawal. If, after having been permanently withdrawn the student returns and seeks re-enrolment in the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs within the school year and the family are in arrears, all outstanding monies must be paid in full.

8.6 Temporary Absence from the French Binational / French Enrichment Programs

Caulfield Junior College Employs several staff members beyond our DET staffing entitlement to facilitate the French Binational/French Enrichment Programs. Due to the school's commitment to staff wages for 2024 the Parent Levy is payable per this Payment Policy in all instances of temporary absence from the French Section. Please see CJC Attendance Policy further information.

9 Appendices

- Appendix 1.0 *Caulfield Junior College Parent Curriculum Contributions 2024.*
- Appendix 2.0 *Supporting Families Experiencing Hardship.*
- Appendix 3.0 *Understanding Parent Payment Categories.*



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10 Evaluation

This policy will be accessible via the school website and on request at the school office. The school will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy at least annually as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community.