

Parent Payment Policy

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

Mernda Park Primary School Council sets Parent Payments in line with Department of Education & Training (DET) guidelines. Charges will be indicated in any request for payment to parents/guardians with clear specifications, descriptions and costs within these three categories:

- **Essential Student Learning Items** - 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. At Mernda Park Primary School we purchase student bookbags and bulk supplies for the students' use, enabling considerable savings to parents due to our sizeable buying power.

Parents have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources from the available specified list, **only after consultation with the Principal to avoid risk of highlighting that any child is different** e.g. teacher asks children to get out their yellow writing book and a child has a blue one, or the item does not meet the specification. There will still be a balance of **Essential Student Learning Items** charge requested in the event a parent chooses to provide the bookbag items themselves, as Mernda Park PS purchases a number of bulk classroom materials, supplies and learning programs including coding resources, educational tools such as iPads, computers and software such as Reading Eggs, Mathletics and Spellodrome.

- **Optional Items** - those items, activities or services that are offered in addition to or to 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 such as camps and excursions, etc.
- **Voluntary Financial Contributions** Parents can be invited to make a donation to the school for a general or specific purpose, e.g., Resource Room Fund which are tax deductible.
- Parent payments are requested to enhance the educational opportunities for students and further enrich the teaching and learning program as we strive to achieve our future school plans. Parent contributions in all forms are highly valued by school communities as they ensure all students can access a broad range of learning opportunities and support their aspirations.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Mernda Park PS issues the annual Material Charges / Booklist payment request early in Term 4 of the preceding year so that parents are not burdened with additional financial stress following Christmas, holidays and other commencement of new year school expenses, e.g. new shoes and uniform etc.

Payment options offered at Mernda Park are:

- Cash/cheque/efpos in person at the school office
- Credit card at the school office or by returning the payment slip

Payment plans are offered and encouraged to enable parents to avoid financial stress by making payments on a regular basis. Confidential arrangements can be made by calling in to the school office to speak to Finoula Murray (Business Manager) or Mary Ryan (Principal), contacting her on 0457 657 785 or via email mernda.park.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

Mernda Park PS will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Ensure parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next

- Mernda Park PS will not use debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents
- Issue only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential items, or optional items accepted by parents, are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the school.

FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS There are a number of support options available for parents which include, but are not limited to:

- CSEF (Camps, Sports & Excursion Fund) \$125 available for each primary student where the parent holds an eligible Health Care or Pension Card per student
- Victorian Government Prep Uniform package for families eligible for CSEF
- State Schools Relief support which provides school uniform and shoes – application process is via Finoula Murray (Business Manager), contacting her on 0457 657 785 or via email mernda.park.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au.
- Local community supports by agencies offering special grants on a case by case basis – infrequent.

Information regarding support options are available from the General Office.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Mernda Park PS understands that at times families may experience financial difficulty or hardship and may find requests for payment stressful. Families are encouraged to contact Finoula Murray (Business Manager) or Mary Ryan (Principal) on 0457 657 785 or mernda.park.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au for a confidential discussion and plan of support or the Principal if they prefer.

The Mernda Park PS Hardship Policy reflects a proactive strategy to discreetly support families experiencing unexpected loss, illness, job loss to enable students to participate where possible rather than be kept at home to avoid expense. This may involve the school communicating with the parent to discuss and support.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Mernda Park PS Parent Payment Policy and Hardship Policy will be published on the school website. Mernda Park PS Material Charges and Booklist will be distributed to families.

General enquiries regarding the Material Charges / Booklist can be made to the office in person or by phoning 0457 657 785. All of our friendly staff in the office are able to assist with general enquiries.

Concerns should be directed to Finoula Murray, Business Manager on 0457 657 785 or mernda.park.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au who will be happy to discuss or answer any queries regarding the Parent Payment Policy, Hardship Policy or Mernda Park Primary School Material Charges /Booklist. Mary Ryan, Principal is happy to discuss concerns with parents by appointment or email mernda.park.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Mernda Park School Council will approve, monitor and review annually the Parent Payment Policy to ensure:

- Educational value
- Access, equity and inclusion
- Affordability
- Engagement and support
- Respect and confidentiality 📄
- Transparency and accountability.

In the review process School Council will identify any factors to be taken into account, including any concerns raised by the school community and will notify any changes to the Parent Payment Policy annually via the school website and newsletter.

Approved by School Council: _____

Date: _____