

# GREATER SHEPPARTON SECONDARY COLLEGE

## PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

Approval Date:	17 February 2021	*Approved by:	School Council
Review Cycle:	One (1) year	Next Review Date:	February 2022
Responsible for Review:	School Council	Initial Endorsement Date:	June 2019

\*School Council Endorsement Required

### RATIONALE

Locally raised funds add significantly to the school's ability to provide a diverse and high-quality curriculum.

School councils are able to request payments or contributions for education items and services from parents and guardians for students in Victorian government schools in the three categories – essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions.

### AIMS

To provide a diverse range of high-quality learning opportunities for all students.

This policy ensures that:

- costs are kept to a minimum
- payment requests are clearly itemised under the three parent payment categories
- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- no student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution
- access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level will not be withheld as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Greater Shepparton Secondary College spends considerable time selecting the most appropriate items and services to meet the needs of our students.

Parents and guardians also have the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources. If parents and guardians choose to provide equivalent materials, this should be done in consultation with the school, as items should meet the specifications provided by the school. There may also be certain items that due to their nature may only be provided by the school.

### PARENT PAYMENT CATEGORIES

**Essential education items** are those items, activities or services that are essential to support student learning of the standard curriculum. These are items the school considers essential for all students and which students take possession of. Parents or guardians are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, if practical and appropriate.

These items include:

- materials that the student takes possession of, including text books, printing in lieu of texts, and student stationery
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, photography, catering, wood and metalcraft)
- school uniform
- transport and entrance for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

The provision of services and materials in this category provide hands on materials in units to expand the educational experience of students, and in many cases includes a model or item produced by the student that they may either consume or own the finished product. It also includes travel costs that be involved in the delivery of a subject that enhances the educational outcomes of the specific unit.

**Optional extras** 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 items include:

- student computer printing for personal use
- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, dance classes
- school-based performances, productions and events
- school magazines, class photographs.

**Voluntary financial contributions** are for those items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school, for example for grounds maintenance, a library, equipment or building trust.

#### **Other support options**

- The school appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist eligible parents, including the Schoolkids Bonus, State Schools Relief Committee and the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund.
- Parents may also use Centrelink crediting if requested.
- If further assistance is required parents are requested to contact their Campus Business Manager.

#### **Consideration of Hardship**

Greater Shepparton Secondary College acknowledges that there are families with financial difficulties. These families will be encouraged to contact either their Campus Business Manager or the College Business Manager to discuss what support options are available, and also to ensure that students will not be disadvantaged due to financial hardship. All discussions with these families will be treated confidentially.

#### **Payment arrangements**

- Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions. Details of all charges will be published on the School website for Parent information at the start of December in the year preceding the relevant charges. Accounts for all charges will be sent at the start of each school year, with follow up statements to be sent on at least 2 other occasions through the year.

- Accounts for any additional activities throughout the year will be advised as early as possible (e.g. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the event).
- Students in Year levels that enrol in new units at the start of Semester 2, any charges associated with these units will be advised promptly at the start of Term 3.

- Costs will be kept to a minimum with payment requests/letters fair and reasonable. To further assist parents with payments, three payment options have been developed:

Option A                      Full amount at the beginning of Term 1

Option B                      Instalment arrangements of:

- Start of Term 1 - 60%
- Start of Term 2 - 20%
- Start of Term 3 - 20%

Option C                      Payment plan in consultation with School Finance staff

- Alternative payment options are available through the school and parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.
- Payments for some Optional items may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Payment requests to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional extra or voluntary financial contribution.
- Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.
- Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional extras will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once a month.
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued per year to parents and guardians.
- All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.
- Where a payment is required to be paid to the School, which is acting as a collection agency for an outside organisation, payment and enrolment in any outside course or activity will not be confirmed until payment is made to the School. Greater Shepparton Secondary College will not make payment to any outside agency until payment has been made to the School.

### **Communication with Families**

This policy will be displayed on the school's website where it will be available for all parents to access.

If parents have any queries they are encouraged to contact the school Principal or Business Manager.

**Refunds**

"Our school will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally we will not be able to refund payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment."

**EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the school's budget process.