Heathcote Primary School - Parent Payment Policy

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 education items and voluntary financial contributions.

Heathcote Primary School has spent considerable time selecting the most appropriate requisites to meet the needs of our children.

No student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution.

Parent Payment Categories

**Essential education items** are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents and guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide.

These items include:
- materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery;
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, ceramics, photography, catering);
- school uniform;
- transport and entrance costs for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend;
- student computer printing,

**Optional education items** (or non-essential materials and services) are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program, and 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:
- extra-curricular programs or activities e.g. instrumental music, tuition classes;
- school-based performances, productions and events; and
- school magazines, class photographs.

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

**Second hand uniform shop**

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children’s education the school operates a second-hand uniform shop.

**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 parents, including the School Start Bonus, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and State Schools Relief Committee support.
Education Maintenance Allowance
A parent or guardian of a child under 16 years of age who holds an eligible Centrelink benefit and a Health Care Card or pension card, may be entitled to the Education Maintenance Allowance

Parents have the option of providing essential education items themselves or can authorise the school to direct the family’s EMA towards particular items.

Parents are entitled to know how the EMA is being used for their child’s education. The school will advise parents and guardians of the itemised cost of student materials and services on which they propose to spend the EMA.

Any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of the year will be returned to the parent/guardian unless there is agreement reached with the parent/guardian that this money can be carried over into the next year.

The school will manage the parent payment arrangements to coincide with the timing of the availability of Education Maintenance Allowance.

Payment arrangements
Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions.

Requests for payments are kept to a minimum. To further assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:
Option A  Full amount
Option B  Payment at the beginning of each Term
Option C  Half yearly payment (beginning of Terms 1 & 3)
Option D  Other, payment arrangements

Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encouraged to make an appointment with the school to discuss circumstances and available options. Payments 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 or letters to parents will be itemised and the category each items falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.

Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment. Reminders for unpaid essential education items or optional items 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 to parents and guardians. All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

EVALUATION
This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s four-year review cycle.

This policy was ratified by School Council in March 2014.