PARENT PAYMENTS, EMA AND VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS POLICY

1. Rationale
The school must ensure that the provision of services for students is funded appropriately and that all children have equal access to education.

2. Guidelines
This policy will cover payments for Essential Education Items, Optional Extras and Voluntary Financial Contributions and the parameters, terms and conditions within which these requests may be made.

3. Implementation:
- This policy is based on the DEECD Parent Payments in Victorian Government Schools Policy - 2008 which was issued in conjunction with Circular S381-2007.
- School Council and the Finance Committee will ensure that the school complies with the DEECD policy.
- The school will provide parents with early notice of requests for payment of Essential Education Items, Optional Extras and Voluntary Financial Contributions, i.e., a minimum of 6 weeks notice. Payment may be requested, but not required, prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- Payment arrangements are to coincide with the timing of the availability of the Education Maintenance Allowance. Parents will not be pressured to sign over their portion of the EMA cheque.
- The school will not withhold access to enrolment, or advancement to the next year level, as a condition of payment.
- The school will ensure that the status and details of any payments or non-payments by parents/guardians are confidential.
- The school may issue only one request for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice.
- Any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of the year must be returned to the parent/guardian, unless there is agreement by the parent/guardian, that this money can be carried over into the next year.

The following terms are defined as:

**Essential Education Items**
- Essential items include classroom consumables, including text books and student stationery and classroom supplies. It also includes supplies and materials for Specialist classes, including Art, Library, Music, ICT, Physical Education and LOTE.
- Parents and guardians must be given the option of purchasing equivalent materials from other sources.

**Optional Extras**
- Optional extras include instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program, religious education materials, camps and excursions, school-based performances, productions and special events.

**Voluntary Financial Contributions**
- Schools may invite parents and guardians to make a donation in the form of a voluntary financial contribution to the school. These may include:
  i. contributions to the library fund;
  ii. contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school;
  iii. general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

Parents who have difficulty paying for essential items will be directed to a range of support options including:
- The Education Maintenance Allowance
- School Start Bonus (for newly enrolling preps only)
- State Schools Relief Committee for uniform requirements
Payment Arrangements and Non-Payment
- Students will not be treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction, on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions.
- All students will have access to the standard curriculum program.
- Parents and guardians will be provided with an alternative option for their children, if they choose not to participate in an excursion or camp.
- 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 will be sent to all parents and guardians.
- Under no circumstances will collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used by the school to obtain any funds from parents and guardians.
- The Principal will ensure any records of payment or contribution by parents and guardians is kept confidential.
- Public identification of students, or their parents and guardians who have or have not made a payment or financial contribution, is deemed unacceptable and will not occur in any circumstances.

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