Rationale:
School councils are responsible to ensure that all students have access to the standard curriculum program and activities associated with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). Schools 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 parent payment categories:

- **Essential education items**
- **Optional education items**
- **Voluntary financial contributions.**

Aims:
- To define the meaning of the three categories of parent payments – essential education items, optional education items and voluntary financial contributions.
- To ensure the provision of high quality learning opportunities for all students.
- To ensure school-level parent payment policies and processes are compliant with the Department’s policy requirements.

Definition:
- **Essential education items** are those items or services that are essential to support the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program that parents or guardians are requested to pay the school to provide or may provide themselves, where appropriate.
  - These items may 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, photography, catering)
    - school uniform
    - transport and entrance costs for camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

- **Optional education items** (or non-essential materials and services) 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 may 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.
    - the difference between basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum where the higher cost is more desirable (use of more expensive materials)

- **Voluntary financial contributions** are for specific or general purpose items and services that parents or guardians are invited to make a donation to the school.
  - These items may include:
    - grounds maintenance
    - a library or building trust (these trusts are approved by the ATO and are tax deductible)
    - additional equipment (eg computers)
Implementation:
- All receipts for parent payments are processed through the official account on CASES21 finance and are compliant with Departmental requirements.
- The school will not withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.
- No student will be treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, refused instruction or disadvantaged on the basis of payments not being made.
- Payment requests to parents will be in advance, itemised under each category, and clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.
- Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.
- Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.
- 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.
- The use of coercion or harassment towards parents/guardians to obtain payment is not acceptable.
- In consultation with the school, parents who indicate a preference to purchase equivalent essential education items/services will be granted that option.
- No collectors of any type, including debt collectors, will be used to obtain funds from parents/guardians.
- The Principal will ensure that this policy complies with the Department’s Policy and that all staff adhere to it.
- This policy is available to parents upon request.

- **Financial 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 State Schools Relief Committee support and payment by instalments. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the principal to discuss circumstances and available support options.

  The principal will use discretion in the treatment of non-payment for essential education items and optional extras on an individual basis.

Evaluation:
School Council will review the level and purpose of parent payments and voluntary contributions annually and in doing so will be consistent with any advice or instruction received from DET.