

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program, and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds.

Oberon High School has spent considerable time selecting the most appropriate requisites to meet the needs of our students. Locally raised funds add significantly to the schools ability to provide diverse and high quality curriculum learning opportunities for all students. The booklists contain high quality materials at a competitive price due to our ability to bulk order and the school will, where possible, use class sets to reduce the costs of text books to students.

School councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level policy which covers essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions.

School councils can request payments from parents for student materials and services charges and for voluntary financial contributions.

These payments fall into three categories:

1. **essential education items** which parents and guardians are required to provide or pay the school to provide for their child (e.g. for stationery, class set text books or school uniforms where required, or as a service charge e.g. bus fares to venues, extra printing or photocopying, or as items consumed or taken possession of, such as food, wood, art, metal etc.)
2. **optional extras** which are offered on a user-pays basis and which parents and guardians may choose whether their child accesses or participates in (e.g. for school magazines or extracurricular programs such as singing, instrumental music etc or activities etc) Full payment will need to be made before the student can participate as numbers are required for the program to go ahead.
3. **voluntary financial contributions** which parents and guardians may be invited to donate to the school (e.g. for grounds beautification, additional computers)

Essential Education Items

Essential education items are those items used in 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. The school will, where possible, use class sets to reduce the costs of text books to students.

These items include:

- materials that the individual student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery, combination lock (only available through the school), worksheets etc
- materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics, ceramics, photography, catering, wood, metal)
- school uniform (where applicable)
- essential services associated with, but not considered to be a part of, instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend (e.g. transport and entrance or participation costs)

Optional extras

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Optional extras (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 include:

- instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program (e.g. student computer printing for personal use, internet access for recreational or non-school use, and religious education materials)
- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. instrumental music, year level trips and tours and overseas travel)
- school based performances, productions and events
- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services required for access to the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable (e.g. the use of more expensive materials)
- materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program (e.g. school magazines)
- school facilities and equipment not associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program, and not otherwise provided for through the SRP (e.g. student accident insurance, and hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments).

Voluntary Financial Contributions

School councils may invite parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school, or anyone else, to make a donation in the form of a voluntary financial contribution to the school. Schools may invite voluntary financial contributions for the following purposes:

- contributions to a building trust fund or contributions to a library trust fund (these trust funds are approved by the Australian Taxation Office and are tax deductible)
- contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers or student-related services
- general voluntary financial contributions or donations to the school.

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 (Year 7 students), the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and State Schools Relief Committee support.

Education Maintenance Allowance

A parent or guardian of a child up to 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 (\$460 per annum per secondary student, \$230 per primary student). The annual allowance amount is split evenly between the parents and the school.

Parents have the option of providing essential education items themselves or can authorise the school to direct the school's portion of the family's EMA towards particular items. The school's portion of the EMA will be put towards the cost of essential education items or optional extras. Parents are entitled to know how the EMA is being used for their child's education and these records are available at the school.

The school's portion of the EMA will not be used to offset voluntary financial contributions unless notified by the applicant.

School Start Bonus

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The School Start Bonus which was introduced by the Victorian Government in 2006 to assist parents and guardians of Prep and Year 7 students in meeting the start-up costs of sending their child to school. This initiative provides financial assistance to families for expenditure on school and sporting uniforms, school bags, books and related expenses.

State School Relief

Access to **State Schools Relief** Committee support is available through the Student Wellbeing Manager to assist with clothing/uniforms.

Welfare and support agencies that have established partnership arrangements with schools can provide further assistance to students and their families. Please contact the Student Wellbeing Manager for further information.

Second Hand Books and Uniforms

In order to support parents in meeting the costs of their children's education the school operates a second hand book sale each December and a second hand uniform shop. Please contact the school for further information.

Payment arrangements

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions via the school booklist in the previous year.

Alternative payment options are available through the school with parents encouraged to make contact with the school to discuss circumstances and available options.

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. All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

