



SCHOOL FEES: SETTING and COLLECTION POLICY

RATIONALE

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School has a responsibility to make a Catholic Education available to all Catholic students whose parents seek a Catholic education for them, while embodying the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged (*Mandate P50*), insofar as this is possible.

Schools have a responsibility to communicate the financial constraints under which they operate to parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools.

Parents are required to make a commitment to support Catholic education financially by paying fees as a necessary contribution to the costs of delivering a Catholic education.

DEFINITIONS

School Fees:

- for the purpose of this policy statement, School Fees shall include the total cost of educating a child and thus comprises tuition, levies, all recurrent charges and building levies.

Application Fee:

- The fee associated with processing an application for student enrolment into the school.

Enrolment Fee:

- School fees paid in advance as a deposit, associated with securing a student enrolment into the school, after an offer of enrolment has been made by the school.

Role of the School Board:

- St Mary Star of the Sea is a diocesan accountable school, the Board is responsible for the financial management of the school, including the setting and collecting of school fees in accordance with policies and guidelines of the CECWA (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia)

SCOPE

This policy applies to all children enrolled at St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School from Kindergarten through to Year 10.

PRINCIPLES

1. The School shall ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community, in the context of the policy rationale.
2. Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from a Catholic School.
3. The collection of school fees shall be approached in the spirit of Christian charity and justice.
4. The withholding of access to students from normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.
5. Families with limited capacity to pay school fees have an entitlement to claim a school fee concession. The Principal may, from time to time, request financial information from families to support applications for fee concessions or any other concessions. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.

6. Families with eligible means tested family concession cards (Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card) have an automatic entitlement to school fee concessions.
7. The confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees shall be maintained.
8. Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued.

PROCEDURES

1. School fees are to be announced to the school community before the end of the previous school year. Fees and all discounts, including CECWA's Health Care Card Discount Scheme, shall be clearly advertised and easily accessible to parents. This includes fee brochures, school websites and parent newsletters.
2. On completion of the Application for Enrolment Form parents and/or guardians will be provided with the School's current fee policy and fee schedule. Any clarification needed by parents and/or guardians about the policy shall be given at the initial enrolment interview. Acknowledgement of the fee collection policy and procedures is on the Application for Enrolment form which shall be signed by both parents and/or guardians. In the case of sole custodial parent or guardian, one signature will suffice.
3. Annual fees and charges including maximum increases shall be set by the School Board in accordance with CECWA advice and confirmed by the School Board at the Annual General Meeting in November of the preceding year.
4. Application for Enrolment fee shall be \$50.00 and will be non-refundable.
5. Acceptance of Enrolment fee shall be \$100.00 and will be deducted from the tuition fees in the year of enrolment. Where circumstances beyond the control of the parents result in an acceptance of enrolment not being fulfilled the Principal shall give consideration to a refund of the Acceptance of Enrolment fee. Where circumstances are within parents control the fee will be non-refundable.

6. Health Care Card Discount Scheme

Parents/Guardians who hold eligible means tested family concession cards will receive fee discounts under the Health Care Card (HCC) Discount Scheme in accordance with CECWA guidelines. The discount scheme applies to new and current students enrolled from Kindergarten to Year 10.

For the purposes of the HCC Discount Scheme, reference to means-tested family concession cards includes:

1. Centrelink Family Health Care Card:
 - Eligible cards must be in the name of the parent/guardian and will list the children covered by the card.
 - The name of a child over 16 years of age may not be shown on the family card but those students may still be covered by the family card.
 - Individual cards, in the name of an individual student, are not eligible as they are not means-tested.
2. Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card
3. Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card (Blue card only)

HCC Fees

- I. The HCC fees per child, payable in 2018 by families who qualify under the scheme are:
 - a. Kindergarten to Year 6 HCC Fee \$300 *per student*
 - b. Year 7 – Year 10 HCC Fee \$1500 *per student*

The HCC Fees are inclusive of levies and charges (*e.g Amenities, IT Levy, Insurance*). However, some additional charges are 'user pays' and therefore not included in the HCC discount scheme.

The HCC Fees are subject to further reduction by the corresponding percentage of sibling discount if applicable.

- II. Certain additional charges are not included in the HCC discount and will be itemised on the school account

III. In addition, students on a HCC contribute to the school capital costs through a proportional family Building Levy. The Building Levy for a family on a valid HCC shall be set as a percentage of the appropriate HCC fee for the eldest sibling, i.e.:

a. Kindergarten to Year 6	30% of the HCC Fee	<i>(i.e. \$90 per family)</i>
b. Year 7 – Year 10	20% of the HCC fee	<i>(i.e. \$300 per family)</i>

Families who wish to benefit from the HCC Discount Scheme are required to provide evidence to the School Bursar and complete a standard CECWA form. Government Secondary Assistance scheme is also offered to families with eligible concession cards. A standard Government Secondary Assistance form is to be completed before the end of Term 1 and is available from the School.

7. **Sibling Discounts**

All students and families are eligible for sibling discounts including families who receive automatic fee discounts as holders of eligible means tested family concession cards. The level of sibling discounts set by the School Board are:

- First child enrolled 0%
- Second child enrolled 20% of that child's tuition fee
- Third child enrolled 40% of that child's tuition fee
- Fourth child enrolled and beyond 100% of that child's tuition fee

Fee discounts shall only apply to tuition fees and not to any other annual fees and charges.

8. **Kindergarten Fees**

In accordance with CECWA policy, Kindergarten fees shall be charged as a proportion of the respective Year 1 fee. The specific proportion shall be equal to the FTE of the Kindergarten program run by the school. St Mary Star of the Sea runs the Kindergarten program 3 days per week so the percentage will be 60%.

9. **Attendance of Students to Compulsory Excursions**

Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from a Catholic School and the withholding of access to students from normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.

10. **Split Debtor Accounts**

Principals of Catholic Schools enter into a contract with parents/guardians at the time of enrolment. The Principal agrees to deliver the described educational services and in return the party (ies) agree to pay an amount as described in the School Fee Schedule.

The signed enrolment form is a contract between the parents/guardians and the Principal. This contract is enforceable by the Principal – usually to recover unpaid fees agreed to in its conditions – against any party who is a signatory. The parties are said to be 'jointly and severally liable', which means the Principal can enforce the contract against one or both.

This right does not change if the relationship status between the parties changes (e.g. through a divorce or separation). Just as the Principal remains bound to deliver the education to the child, both parents remain jointly and severally liable to pay the full fee amount. Therefore, the Principal may continue to send each parent a full account of the outstanding school fees. The Principal is not bound by any agreement between the parents or resulting from family law proceedings about how fees are apportioned following the end of their relationship. A parent is not excused from liability to the Principal because they pay child support to the other parent.

Requests for Split Billing must be approved by the Principal and a *Change in Debtor Invoicing Arrangements School Fee Information Form* completed and signed by both parties with the amended apportionment of fee liability equalling 100% of all fees.

It is noted that changes to the enrolment agreement cannot modify the rights and responsibilities that both parents have under statute, and their status as partners with the Principal in the education of their child. The

fact that a parent pays no or discounted fees does not affect that parent's right to be involved in their child's education to the same degree as the full fee paying parent.

11. Fee Collection

At the beginning of the school year, parents/guardians will receive an Annual Statement outlining their Child/children's annual fees and associated levies and charges. Camp fees will be costed accordingly and parents will be required to pay the camp fee in full prior to the designated activity.

A range of options is available to parents/guardians to pay the annual fees and charges:

- **Option 1 – Direct Debit**
Payment of account by weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments automatically to the School from a nominated bank account under agreement with the School. Account must be finalised by the 31 October in each year.
- **Option 2 – Payment in full by end of Term 1**
Payment in full by Cash / Cheque / EFTPOS / BPAY
- **Option 3 – Payment in four instalments (per Term)**
The first instalment is to be paid by 28th February, the second by 31 May, the third by 31 August and the balance by 31 October in each year.

A Payment Options form together with Direct Debit form will be sent to parents with accounts or can be printed from the school website. Every family is expected to complete the Payment Options form and return it to the School Administration Office as soon as practicable after receiving their account.

Parents who are in receipt of Centerlink Payments may choose to have their fees paid through CentrePay. If using this method, every effort must be made to ensure that fees are paid in full by the end of the school year.

Parents who have financial difficulties in meeting their obligation to the School, and who are not eligible to receive HCC Fee Discounts, are invited to meet with the Principal to request a fee concession. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.

12. Unpaid Fees

Every parent who enrolls their child/children in the school has an obligation to pay their school fees as a matter of justice to the whole school community.

Where parents have the capacity to pay fees and have not made any attempt to pay fees by the due date, or leave the school with unpaid fees, then the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued. The School procedures for recovery of fees are:

- 1) A written communication shall be sent to the parents, bringing promptly to their attention the outstanding balance.
- 2) Should there be no response with 14 days, an appropriate person(s) shall approach the parents on a personal basis, in a sensitive, discreet and confidential manner.
- 3) If the personal approach cannot be made, or no action results from it with another 14 days, a formal registered letter from the school Principal shall be sent to remind parents of their financial obligations and invite parents to meet with the Principal to discuss the matter within a specified timeframe.
- 4) Should there be no response or action with 14 days of the letter, the school Principal shall send a formal registered letter with a final notice, seeking payment and outlining the possible outcomes, ie referring the matter to a solicitor/debt collector, which could occur if payment is not received within the specified timeframe.
- 5) Should there be no response or action from the parent/guardian then the matter will be referred, with the approval of the school Board, to a debt collection agency or a solicitor to recover outstanding fees and any additional costs.
- 6) In the event that debt collection agent is not successful in contacting the parent or establishing a payment plan, the School may consider initiating court proceedings. The Executive Director of Catholic Schools shall be advised prior to this action.

- 7) The Debt Collection Agency is to contact the school Principal or their designate before any enforcement proceedings are taken, such as Property Seizure, Sale Order, Earnings Appropriation Order, or any other enforcement action. Schools shall obtain written approval from the Executive Director of Catholic Education.
- 8) The School shall keep a comprehensive documentation of each attempt to resolve the problems of outstanding fees.
- 9) Under no circumstances can a child enrolled in the School be refused on-going enrolment because their parents have not paid fees.

13. Withdrawal of Students

- The school must be given **14 days notice in writing** prior to the withdrawing their child\children. An *Enrolment Cancellation Form* is available from the School Administration. Without such notice the School reserves the right to charge a full-term's fee in lieu of notice.
- In the event of a temporary withdrawal, families wishing to hold a place for a student/s taking extended leave will be charged the full tuition fee.

REFERENCE

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia: School Fees: Setting and Collection Policy Revised 2017