



Topic: School Fees: Setting and Collection Policy

Policy No:

Policy Area: COMMUNITY

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Date for Review: 2017

RATIONALE:

As a Catholic school, operating as part of the Catholic Church, we have a vital mission, to provide a Catholic education for the children of all families in our Parish. As such there is an obligation on us, as a school community, to ensure that all families who desire their children to be educated in their faith, can do so without fear of prejudice on the grounds of financial concerns.

There is also a recognition that State and Commonwealth funding, although significant, does not provide all of the money necessary to maintain the operation of the school. We are very much dependent upon the financial contributions of the families within the school to maintain the best possible level of educational service that we provide. There is therefore an obligation on the part of families with children at St. Joseph's to contribute to the cost of running the school. This obligation, which shall be termed "school fees" for the purposes of this policy, incorporates tuition fees, amenities fees, various levies and other charges. In the interests of justice and equity for all members of our school community there is the expectation that all families will contribute to the collection of school fees according to their ability to do so.

PRINCIPLES:

To ensure that there is equity and justice in all financial matters relating to school fee collection, the following principles will apply.

1. The collection of school fees shall be approached in the spirit of Christian charity and justice.
2. Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from a Catholic school.
3. The School Board, has the responsibility for the financial management of the school and, consequently, the oversight of the procedures implemented for the setting and collection of school fees.

4. St Joseph's shall ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community.
5. Families with limited capacity to pay school fees have an entitlement to claim a fee concession. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.
6. Families with eligible means tested Family Concession Cards have an automatic entitlement to tuition fee concessions.
7. The withholding of access to students of normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.
8. Every effort shall be made to protect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees.
9. Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued

PROCEDURES

General

1. A School Fee Booklet is produced annually, specifically addressing:
 - communication of the policy to parents
 - details of any additional charges as well as information relating to fee concessions
 - a timeline for the payment of accounts
 - a process for negotiating the method of payment and the provision of concessions if required
 - information regarding access to the various forms of government assistance
 - procedures following non-payment
2. The School Fees: Setting and Collection policy is reviewed annually and updated if required to reflect:
 - any changes to the Catholic Education Commission of WA (CECWA) Policy statement 'School Fees: Setting and Collection'
 - any legislative changes
 - any community socio-economic considerations
3. The principal may from time to time request financial information from families to support applications for fee concessions or any other concessions.

4. On application for admission parents and/or guardians will be provided with the School Fee Booklet (any clarification needed by the parents and/or guardians about the school's fee policy shall be given at the initial enrolment interview). Acknowledgment of the fee collection procedures shall be on the 'Application for Enrolment' form which shall be signed by both parents and/or guardians. In the case of a sole custodial parent or guardian, one signature will suffice
5. Any changes to the School Fee Policy will generally be communicated to parents and the school community at the Combined School Board and P&F AGM in November, or at least four weeks prior to the proposed implementation date.
6. The School Board shall ensure that in setting the school fees each year, they do not exceed the recommended increase set by the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia. The Board shall also ensure that in setting the school fees that the socio-economic status of the school community is kept in mind.

Fee Setting

1. Annual fees and charges including maximum increases shall be set by the School Board in accordance with CECWA advice provided during the budget process each year.
2. Application for Enrolment fees, if applicable to the school, shall be a maximum of \$35.00 or 1% of the annual tuition fee whichever is the greater and shall be non-refundable.
3. Should the School wish to exceed the maximum increase in school fees and charges, it shall obtain the prior written approval of the Director of Catholic Education.
4. The CECWA decision regarding automatic tuition fee discounts for the holders of eligible means tested family concession cards has been implemented. The fee level shall be communicated to schools by the Catholic Education Office during the budget process each year.
5. The level of sibling discounts shall be determined by the School Board. As a guide, the following sibling discount levels are suggested for both primary and secondary schools:

1st child enrolled	0%
2nd child enrolled	20% of that child's tuition fee
3rd child enrolled	40% of that child's tuition fee
4th child enrolled and beyond	100% of that child's tuition fee

6. Kindergarten fees shall be charged as a proportion (e.g. 0.6 FTE) of the respective first child full time fee. Sibling discounts apply to kindergarten students.
7. All students and families are eligible for sibling discounts including families who receive automatic tuition fee discounts as holders of eligible means tested family concession cards.

8. The School shall ensure that to the best of our ability the usual family discounts are offered for students with Special Needs regardless of whether their siblings attend St Joseph's Pinjarra or other Catholic primary schools.

Fee Payment Timeline

1. Annual Fees are sent home in the second week of Semester One. 50% of the Annual Fee is due to be paid by the end of Week Five of Term One.
2. At the commencement of Semester Two fee updates will be sent home. Second semester fees are due to be paid by Week Five of Term Three.
3. Fees may be paid by cheque, cash, or EFTPOS transaction at the school office during normal office hours, or by BPay.
4. Parents may also pay school fees by arranging an authorised periodic payment or direct debit from their bank account to the school's CDF account. Forms to arrange such payments are available from the office.
5. The School is also part of the CentrePay system, a service offered by Centrelink where families can have School Fees deducted directly from their Centrelink Pension. Forms to arrange such payments are available from the office.
6. Fees are expected to be paid in two equal payments by Week Five of each semester. However, the payment of school fees may be varied to be paid on a weekly, fortnightly, monthly, term or annual basis. In order to organise a variation parents are required to complete a Variation of School Fee Application; available on the school website or from the School Office.
7. Any parent seeking relief or a concession for their school fees is encouraged to contact the Principal to discuss the matter and complete a Variation of School Fee Schedule.

Procedures for Non-Payment of School Fees:

1. School Fees are due to be paid by Week Five of the semester in which they are issued.
2. If payment has not been received by the commencement of Week Six then a reminder account will be issued.
3. If by the commencement of Week Eight the account remains outstanding the Registrar will telephone the person responsible for the fees to ensure the account has been received, request payment and discuss the options available to pay the account.
4. If after a further seven days the account remains outstanding a letter will be sent requesting the parent arrange a meeting with the Principal.

5. If the above procedures fail to resolve the matter of outstanding fees the School reserves the right to engage the services of a Debt Collection Agency. Such a step will only be taken after careful consideration of all the factors connected with the family who owes fees.

Procedure for Insufficient Payment Arrangement

1. Many families utilise the ability to pay School Fees through a Direct Debit from their bank account. When these Direct Debit Arrangements run for many years, or the family has further children attending the School, the amount deducted may become insufficient to cover the Fees due.
2. Following the issue of the Annual Fee Account in Week Two of Semester One, the Registrar will review that the amount paid by families on Direct Debit Arrangements is sufficient to cover that year's fees.
3. Where the amount is not sufficient, the registrar will write to the person responsible for the payment of the account advising of the need to review the amount paid and suggesting a new amount for deduction. This letter also offers the ability to meet with the Principal should circumstances warrant a discussion over the inability to support an increased payment amount.
4. If after seven days no response is received to the letter, the Registrar will telephone the person responsible for the fees to ensure the account has been received, request payment and discuss the options available to pay the account.

Procedure for Dishonouring Direct Debit Payment

1. On occasion a direct debit payment will dishonour due to changed bank account details, or insufficient funds held by the payer of the amount.
2. Where a payment dishonours more than three times the Registrar will telephone the person making the payment to discuss the reasons behind the dishonour.
3. Where account details have changed the updated details will be collected and the Direct Debit Authority updated.
4. Where the payment is dishonouring due to insufficient funds, alternative options will be discussed, to better suit the payer of the account. It may be necessary in this situation to cancel the Direct Debit Arrangement.