



St Mary's School

To do ordinary things extraordinarily well

School Fees: Setting and Collection

Rationale

The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) 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, p 50), insofar as this is possible.

St Mary's School is reminded that it is essential to minimise potential barriers for parents such as fees and other costs (Mandate, p 7), and to keep costs to parents as low as possible (Mandate p, 38). Schools need to avoid material ambitions that might lead to higher fees and force them into giving counter-witness (Mandate, p. 22).

St Mary's School has 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 St Mary's School 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 comprises: tuition fees; levies (e.g. curriculum levies, or IT levies); and other charges (e.g. book hire, insurance, compulsory excursions², camp fees, amenities, building levies, etc.).

Application Fee:

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

Enrolment Deposit:

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

Role of School Boards or School Councils:

- in diocesan accountable schools, Boards are responsible for the financial management of the school, including the setting and collecting of school fees in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the CECWA³.
- in Order accountable schools, Boards or Councils may only have an advisory role with regard to the setting and collection of school fees.

Principles

- 1.1 St Mary's School shall ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community, in the context of the policy rationale.
- 1.2 Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from St Mary's School.
- 1.3 The collection of school fees shall be approached in the spirit of Christian charity and justice.
- 1.4 The withholding of access to students from normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.
- 1.5 Families with limited capacity to pay school fees have an entitlement to claim a school fee concession. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.
- 1.6 Families with eligible means tested family concession cards (Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card) have an automatic entitlement to school fee and Building Levy concessions. This does not include additional charges such as school camp. Families eligible for the Health Care Card Tuition Fee Discount Scheme will need to present their card to the office at the beginning of each school year. Applications for eligible Health Care cards and Pensioner concession cards must be received by the end of Term One each year.
- 1.7 The confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees shall be maintained, as mandated in legislation⁴.
- 1.8 Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued.

Procedures

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 St Mary's School shall comply with a standard schedule of fees to ensure consistency and comparability across all schools in the System.
- 2.3 St Mary's School shall have a written *School Fees: Setting and Collection* policy outlining the above principles, school fees and payment methods. Specific issues to be addressed are:
 - a recognition of the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged;
 - communication of the policy to parents;
 - details of school fees as well as information relating to the discounts and fee concessions defined in this policy;
 - 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; and
 - procedures following non-payment, up to and including Judgement;

- 2.4 This policy shall be updated annually to reflect:
 - a) any changes to the CECWA *School Fees: Setting and Collection* policy;
 - b) any legislative changes;
 - c) any community socio-economic considerations.
- 2.5 The Principal may, from time to time, request financial information from families to support applications for fee concessions or any other concessions.
- 2.6 Families that are holders of an eligible means-tested family concession card are simply required to provide evidence that their card is valid for the duration of the academic year.
- 2.7 On application for admission, parents and/or guardians will be provided with the school’s fee policy.
- 2.8 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.

Fees Prior to Enrolment

- 2.9 St Mary’s School Board has elected not to charge prospective families enrolment fees.

Fee Setting

- 2.10 Annual school fees shall be set by the School Board during the budget process each year. Increases to total school fees shall be in accordance with the maximum increase parameters annually set by the CECWA.
- 2.11 St Mary’s School shall obtain the prior written approval of the Executive Director of Catholic Education if it wishes to exceed the maximum increase in school fees and charges.
- 2.12 Building Levy: The Building Levy contributes to maintaining school buildings, costs towards fixtures of buildings, purchase of equipment used exclusively for maintaining the buildings. In addition, the Building Levy will in part contribute to the debt servicing of the schools existing and future building loans. This levy is not tax-deductible. Refer to the School fee Schedule for the current year Building Levy Fee.

Fee Discounts

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 The CECWA introduced the Health Care Card Discount Scheme in 2005 to provide an automatic fee concession for the holders of eligible means tested family concession cards.

The total discounted school fees for holders of eligible means tested family concession cards are set as follows:

Kindergarten to Year 6	\$300, per student
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These school fees shall be annually reviewed by the CECWA, based on changes to the eligibility income thresholds, and shall be communicated to schools by the CEWA office during the budget process each year.

Family building levies shall be charged at the corresponding percentage of the Health Care Card school fee.

Kindergarten to Year 6	30% of HCC fee	\$90 per family
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St Mary’s School may add certain specific additional charges for holders of eligible means- tested family concession cards. These may be levied on a user-pays basis and could include charges associated with camps, music lessons and other activities where there are direct and additional costs associated with such activities.

Discounts for families

- 2.15 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 that the school runs.
- 2.16 All students and families are eligible for family discounts, including families who receive automatic tuition fee discounts as holders of eligible means tested family concession cards.
- 2.17 The level of sibling discounts shall be determined by the School Board. The following sibling discount levels apply for each calendar year that children are enrolled and attending St Mary’s School:

1 st child enrolled	0%
2 nd child enrolled	20%
3 rd child enrolled	40%
4 th child enrolled	Free

Fee Collection

2.18 Within the first two weeks of Term One an Annual Fees account will be sent to all parents via the eldest child. The account will contain the total of all fees payable for the year for each child. A reminder notice will be placed in the Week Eight Newsletter for families to make a contribution towards their school fees. A fee statement of outstanding balances will be sent to families at the start of each term.

An ‘Additional School Charges’ invoice is sent separately from fees to cover the cost of IT Software, School Diaries and Textbooks.

2.19 Payment options available are cash, cheque, BPAy or Direct Debit.

2.20 Should families not have made a contribution towards their annual school fees or arranged to speak with the Principal, by the end of Term One, about a payment plan then a formal fee collection process will be instigated.

2.21 The Principal shall ensure that prior to legal action, all reasonable efforts have been made to contact parents and/or guardians in order to resolve fee payment issues. Where parents and/or guardians have ignored all reasonable attempts to negotiate a fee payment strategy and further action is required:

- Documentation shall be kept on each attempt to resolve the problems of outstanding fees

- Parents and/or guardians shall be notified that the services of a debt collection agency or solicitor shall be engaged to recover outstanding fees and any additional costs shall be added to the account in accordance with the School Fee Policy
- St Mary's School shall only engage the services of a debt collection agency or solicitor who undertakes to comply with the ACCC, Trade Practices Act (TPA) and ASIC Debt Collection Guideline: for collectors and creditors.
- A General Procedure Claim (summons) can be issued by the appropriate school authority via the debt collection agency engaged and judgment entered against the parent. Before enforcement proceedings are taken, such as a Property Seizure and Sale Order, Earnings Appropriation Order, or any other enforcement action, written approval shall be obtained from the Executive Director of Catholic Education.
- Under no circumstances will a child enrolled in St Mary's School be refused on-going enrolment because their parents/guardians have not paid fees.

Please note: Where no arrangements have been made with the Principal, the School, without notice, may seek recovery through its Debt Collection Agency. Parents/guardians will be liable for any legal costs and commissions incurred recovery of the debt.

2.22 Approval of write-offs, discounts and rebates: Discounts, rebates, exemptions and the write-off of debts in relation to school fees and levies should be approved by the School Board, or the Principal on delegated authority.

a. The Principal has the delegated authority from the St Mary's School Board to "Write Off" a bad debt to a maximum of \$1500, without consultation with the School Board. These Write Offs will be presented to the Finance Committee.

b. The Finance Committee will present the School Board an Annual Report listing: Write-offs, rebates, discounts and exemptions.

References

Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009 – 2015

CECWA *School Excursions* policy

Catholic School Board Constitution, Western Australia

Privacy Act 1988

Supporting Guidelines for Schools, CECWA *School Fees: Setting and Collection* policy