



ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL FEES: SETTING & COLLECTION POLICY

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, 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.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy statement, School Fees shall include the total cost of educating a child and comprises: tuition fees, levies (IT and book levies) and other charges (e.g. excursions, camp fees, amenities, book hire, insurance).

ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS

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 CECWA. 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. Schools 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 of 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. 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, as mandated in legislation.
8. Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued.

PROCEDURES

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 and put to the Annual General School Meeting. If there is a need to exceed the maximum increase in school fees and charges, the school shall gain approval of the Director of Catholic Education.
2. On application for admission, parents and/or guardians will be provided with a Handbook outlining the school fee charges and policy, and details of any additional charges and information relating to the school fee concession policy. The School Fee Policy will be posted on the School Website.
3. A non-refundable Application Fee of \$55 must be paid when submitting an application to attend St Patrick's Primary School. Once offered a place, an Enrolment Fee of \$150 must be paid to confirm acceptance of a place. This Enrolment Fee will be refunded on the first fee statement; however, it is non-refundable should the position be accepted and then later declined.
4. Fees still apply to students on holiday or absent from school. Pre-Kindy sessions also require payment for non attendance.
5. A place will not be held for longer than six months unless approved by the principal. Requests must be made in writing to the principal.
6. Families that are holders of an eligible means-tested family concession card are required to provide evidence that their card is valid for the duration of the academic year and complete a Health Care Card Tuition Fee Discount Scheme form, to be eligible for discounted school fees as per CECWA Health Care Card Discount Scheme, with the addition of a discounted Family Building Levy charge and specific additional charges associated with excursions, camps, dance lessons and activities with direct user pays costs.
7. St Patrick's Primary School offers sibling discounts for families with siblings enrolled in Kindergarten through to Year 6, as per CECWA suggested sibling discount levels.
8. Family discounts will be offered for Special Education Students whether siblings attend the same Catholic school or a number of Catholic schools.
9. Payment plans will be set up upon request from parents, to give the opportunity for smaller more regular payments as opposed to term payments.
10. If parents are experiencing financial difficulty paying the fee account, then an appointment must be made with the Principal to discuss method of payment, concessions and remissions if required. The Principal may, from time to time, request financial information from families to support applications for fee concessions or any other concessions.
11. A timeline for adjusted payments will be set up for those parents who are having difficulty paying fees and have had a meeting with the Principal with financial documentation as requested.
12. School Fee Accounts will be sent out at the beginning of the year and a Statement/Reminder issued in Term 2, 3 and 4. Fees are due by the date given on the fee account and before the end of each term
13. When St Patrick's Primary School office is notified parents have split/separated, the child's fee account and contact/emergency details will be updated to reflect the situation. Responsibility for the Fee Account will be split evenly between the people who have signed the Confirmation of Enrolment Form, unless otherwise advised in writing by both parents.

FEE COLLECTION

1. If a term fees have not been paid by the end of the term or the due date on the account, a written communication shall be sent to the parents, bringing promptly to their attention the outstanding balance.
2. Should there be no response within 14 days, the Principal or Finance Manager 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 within another 14 days, a formal registered letter from the school Principal will be sent to remind parents of their financial obligations. This letter will include an invitation to discuss the matter with the school and a specified timeframe for a response, as per CECWA Sample Letter 1: *Fee Obligations* in the *Supporting Guidelines* Document.
4. Should there be no response or action within 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, including legal action, which could occur if payment is not received within the specified timeframe, as per CECWA Sample Letter 2: *Fee Obligations* in the *Supporting Guidelines* Document.
5. If, despite this last letter, there is no response or action from the parent and/or guardian to resolve the payment of school fees, the Finance Manager will present to School Board, all documentation showing the attempts to collect the school fees (with names removed) and ask for the Board approval to engage the services of a debt collection agency or a solicitor to recover outstanding fees and any additional costs incurred in the recovery of the outstanding debt.
6. In the event that debt collection agent is not successful in contacting the parents or in establishing a debt repayment plan, schools may consider initiating court proceedings, by following the CECWA School Fees: Setting and Collection policy.