



St Patricks Primary School:

School Fees Setting and Collections Policy

Rationale

St Patrick's 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 be considered to be tuition fees, levies and other charges (e.g. excursions, camp fees, amenities, book hire)

Application for Enrolment Fee: the fee associated with processing an application for student enrolment into a school.

Acceptance of Enrolment Fee: the fee 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 or Councils have a managerial role with regard to the setting and collecting of school fees in Order accountable schools, Boards or Councils may only have an advisory role with regard to the setting and collection of school fees

Scope

This policy applies to all children enrolled at St Patrick's School Katanning from Kindergarten to Year 6.

Principles

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 CECWA shall ensure the financial viability of group funded schools. The financial viability of Order accountable group funded schools and Order accountable non-group funded schools is ensured by the relevant Order.
4. The School Board, or School Council in the relevant Order accountable schools, has the responsibility for the financial management of the school and, consequently, is responsible for the collection of school fees.
5. Schools shall ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community.
6. 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.
7. Families with eligible means tested family concession cards have an automatic entitlement to tuition fee concessions.
8. The withholding of access to students of normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.
9. Every effort shall be made to protect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees.
10. 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. 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 6.
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.
 2. Individual cards, in the name of an individual student, are not eligible as they are not means tested.
 3. Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card
 4. Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card (Blue card only)

HCC Fees

The HCC fees per child, payable in 2018 by families who qualify under the scheme are: Kindergarten to Year 6 HCC Fee \$300 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

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.:

Kindergarten to Year 6	30% of the HCC Fee	(i.e. \$90 per family)
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Families who wish to benefit from the HCC Discount Scheme are required to provide evidence to the school administration officer and complete a standard CECWA form.

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.

- 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

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 Patrick's School runs the Kindergarten program 3 days per week so the percentage will be 60%.

The St Patrick's School Board has made the decision to trial no charge to Kindergarten fees until 2021. This will be reviewed yearly.

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

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.

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 charged at a later date.

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

Option 1 – PAYMENT IN FULL

Payment in full by Cash / Cheque / EFTPOS / BPAY. This must be paid by the 31st March.

Option 2 – 3 EQUAL PAYMENTS

3 equal payments by Cash / Cheque / EFTPOS / BPAY/DIRECT DEBIT. Payments must be made by the end of term 1, 2 and 3

Option 3 – 18 EQUAL PAYMENTS

18 equal fortnightly payments by Cash / Cheque / EFTPOS / BPAY/DIRECT DEBIT.

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 possible.

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.

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. 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 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.

Withdrawal of Students

The school must be given **14 days notice in writing** prior to the withdrawing their child\children. Without such notice the School reserves the right to charge a full-term's fee in lieu of notice. Only the tuition fee will be refunded.

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.

